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THE  
THEOLOGICAL WORKS

OF

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VOL. VI.

SERMONS CXXIX.—CXLVI.

WITH

FIVE SERMONS PREACHED ON PARTICULAR OCCASIONS.

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OXFORD:

JOHN HENRY PARKER.

MDCCCXLV.

LONDON:  
GEORGE BARCLAY, CASTLE STREET, LEICESTER SQUARE.





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THE GOLDEN RULE OF EQUITY.

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MATT. vii. 12.

*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

ALTHOUGH in this world, as the Wise Man observed, “ All [Eccl. 9. 2.] things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked;” to him that feareth God, and to him that feareth Him not: yea, the things of this world are generally so dispensed, that the best men have the most of the troubles, and the worst usually the most of the pleasures of it, so that there is no knowing vice from virtue by its outward garb and condition here: yet it is not so in the other world which is appointed for man to live in: for there vice shall have its condign punishments, and virtue its just rewards; so that there shall be as great a difference bewixt Saints and sinners in their estate and condition, as there is in their temper and inclinations; the one being advanced as high in happiness, and the other depressed as low in misery, as it is possible for them to be. And the reason is, because as men go from this into the other world they must pass through the fiery trial, and under a strict examination at the tribunal of the Most High God, where the secrets of all hearts are disclosed, and all men’s lives are reviewed, and all their actions looked over again, and ex-

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amined by the exactest rules of justice: and according as men are there found to have carried themselves whilst they were on earth, they are presently adjudged to their eternal habitations. If it be there found upon trial, that they have performed their duty both to God and man, as they ought to do, then, in and through the merits of Jesus Christ, they have all happiness and honour imaginable conferred upon them. But if they be there found to have misspent their time, embezzled their talents, and neglected their duty either to their great Creator, or their fellow-creatures, whilst they were upon earth, for a just recompense of reward, they are condemned to eternal misery and torment.

Now it will not, it cannot be long, before you and I must all stand before this tribunal, and there give up our accounts before the great and all-wise Judge of Heaven and Earth. But, blessed be His glorious Name for it, there is none of us but as yet may so prepare ourselves for it, as to come off with joy and comfort at that day. For He that then will be our Judge, as yet proffers to be our Advocate, yea, and our Saviour too: and He hath made that provision for us, and given such directions to us, how to prevent our condemnation at that time, that it is nothing but our own folly and madness that can make us subject to it. For He having in our natures undergone the curse of the Law, and suffered that death which was due to us, hath thereby put us into a capacity of avoiding it; which we may all do, if we will but perform the conditions which He requires in His Gospel, in order to it; which are only to repent of our former sins, and sincerely endeavour unto the utmost of our power, for the future, to perform our duty, both to God and man. And when we have done all, trust and depend only upon Him for the pardon of our sins, and defects in duty, and for the acceptance both of our persons and performances before God. And that there might be nothing wanting on His part to make us happy, He hath with His Own mouth most clearly discovered to us the several duties both to God and man, which at the day of judgment he will proceed chiefly upon, and search narrowly into, whether we have used the utmost of our power and skill to perform them aright or no.

As to the Most High God, our blessed Saviour hath forewarned us, “to love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our might, and with all our mind,” “to fear Him,” and none but Him, “to believe and trust on Him,” “to seek His Kingdom, and the righteousness thereof in the first place,” and “to worship Him in spirit and in truth,” and the like.

And as to men, He hath enjoined “not to judge others,” “not be angry or passionate with one another, especially without a just cause,” but “to love one another as He loved us;” yea, “to love our very enemies;” “to be obedient to magistrates:” “to be charitable to the poor;” “to be just and righteous unto all.” Indeed, whatsoever duty it is that we owe to one another, He hath somewhere or other in His Gospel most clearly described it to us. And that we may always keep ourselves within the bounds of equity and justice, He hath given us here in the words of my text a short and comprehensive rule, easy to be kept always in our minds, whereby to order all our actions towards one another, saying, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

Which words we must not look upon only as containing good advice, and wholesome counsel and direction for the ordering of our lives and conversations, but we are to esteem them to be what really they are, even an express command which Christ enjoins all His disciples punctually to observe, as the standard of all our civil actions; and that whereby He will examine and weigh them all at the day of judgment. So that all our actions to one another shall be either approved of, or condemned, according as they are, or are not conformable to this rule. For this, our Saviour Himself here tells us, “is the Law and the Prophets;” that is, not only, as some would have it, what the Law and the Prophets teach, but it is the sum and substance of whatsoever is required in the Law and Prophets, as to our carriage and behaviour to each other; it being the same, in effect, with that general precept of the Law, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” which St. Paul tells us “is the fulfilling of the Law;” that is, the second table of the Law, or

Matt. 22. 37.

ch. 10. 28.

John 14. 1.

Matt. 6. 33.

John 4. 24.

Matt. 7. 1.

ch. 5. 22.

John 15. 12.

Matt. 5. 44.

ch. 22. 21.

ch. 5. 42;

ch. 25. 35.

ch. 5. 20,

Lev. 19. 18.

Rom. 13.

8-10.



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Matt. 22. 40.

[Dial. c.  
Tryphon.  
Jud. §. 93.  
p. 190. D.  
ed. Bened.]

[Epit. Div.  
Inst. cap. lx.  
p. 49, t. ii.  
ed. Par.  
1748.]

so far as it respects our duty to our neighbour. And so our Saviour Himself elsewhere saith, that all the Law and the Prophets hang upon these two commandments, “Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.” So that as all the duties which we owe to God are comprised under our loving Him above all things, so whatsoever it is that we are bound to perform unto our neighbour is briefly comprehended in our loving him as ourselves; which it is impossible for us to express in any other ways than by doing unto others whatsoever we would that they should do to us. For if I love my neighbour as myself, I cannot but desire the same good things for him which I do for myself. And if I desire the same good things for my neighbour which I do for myself, I must needs do to him whatsoever I would that he should do to me; for I would that he should do all the good he can for me; and unless I do the same to him, I do not desire his good as I do mine own, nor by consequence love him as myself. And therefore Justin Martyr long ago observed, that *ὁ τὸν πλησίον ὡς ἑαυτὸν ἀγαπῶν, ἅπερ αὐτῷ βούλεται ἀγαθὰ, καὶ αὐτῷ βουλήσεται*, ‘He that loves his neighbour as himself, the same good things which he wills unto himself, he wills them also to his neighbour.’ But all men in the world are to be reckoned as our neighbours, whom by consequence we are to love as we do ourselves, and do to them as we would have them do to us. But ourselves would willingly be hurt by none, but be done good to by all; and therefore if we follow this rule, we shall neither do any hurt unto others, nor neglect any good which we can do for them, and by consequence must needs fulfil all the Moral Law as it respects our neighbour. And hence it is that our Saviour saith, that “this is the Law and the Prophets;” because there is no duty which we owe unto our neighbour, but it may be referred to, and is really comprised under this one general rule, which St. Hierome therefore rightly calls, *Totius justitiæ brevium*, ‘an abstract or compendium of all justice and equity.’ And before him, Lactantius to the same purpose said, *Radix justitiæ et omne fundamentum æquitatis est illud, ut ne facias ulli, quod pati nolis; sed alterius animum de tuo metiaris*, ‘The root of justice, and the whole found-

ation of equity is this; that thou dost not do what thou wouldst not suffer, but measure another's mind by thine own.' So as still to remember that what thou thinkest to be evil for thee, another thinks to be evil to him; and therefore thou shouldst not do that to him which thou wouldst not he should do to thee.

This, therefore, being so excellent and comprehensive a duty, that, according to our blessed Saviour's Own assertion, it contains whatsoever either the Law or Prophets require of us to one another, there is none of us that truly mind our future happiness, but must needs be very desirous clearly to understand the full meaning and purport of it; especially considering how great an help it will be in all our civil actions to one another, that if we do but still walk according to this one short rule rightly understood, we cannot fail in our conversing with one another, but shall still perform to one another whatsoever the Law or Prophets, I may say the Gospel too, requires to be performed by us; yea, so as that we may know within ourselves, and in our own consciences, whether we do good or evil to our neighbour, by considering whether it be according to what we would have done unto ourselves or no; and so pass judgment upon our own actions, and upon what we do to others, only by observing our own will, and what we would have others do to us, and so we may be a Law unto ourselves, as the Apostle saith the Rom. 2. 14. Gentiles were; which, that you may all be by the right understanding and using of this rule, I shall endeavour to give you the true sense and notion of it, which is not so easily done as said, there being more in it than we commonly are aware of, insomuch that though it be an ordinary saying among us, "Do as ye would be done by," yet I fear it is not so generally and truly understood as it ought to be, nor so easy to be explained, as it may seem at first sight, by reason of its extent and comprehensiveness: howsoever, I shall endeavour to explain it as fully and clearly as I can; first, by opening the true meaning of the words in general; and secondly, by shewing how they are to be applied to our particular actions.

I. As for the first, though the words be but few, they are very significant, every one, as well as all, having its weight,

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[Hom. in  
Matt. xxiii.  
t. vii. p. 291,  
A.]

[Serm.  
Dom. in  
Mont. lib. ii.  
c. xxii. § 74.]

[Cyp. de  
Orat. Do-  
min. p. 213,  
ed. Bened.]

[Ibid.]

and therefore deserving to be considered apart, in order to the right understanding of the whole ; and therefore I shall take them in order as they lie. But the particle οὖν, ‘therefore,’ whether it infer these from the preceding words, as St. Chrysostom expounds it, or be redundant here as others would have it, it not being any ways material to the true meaning of the words, I shall pass it by, and begin with these words, “All things whatsoever ye would.” Which words must be understood with caution, otherwise they may be perverted to a bad sense, and a wrong use made of this excellent and divine rule ; for our wills being corrupt, we may sometimes will what is evil to ourselves, and, by consequence, think ourselves bound to do the same to our neighbour. As, for example, a man that doth not much care for being a rational creature, and therefore delights to be some time deprived of the use of his reason by intoxicating liquors, he desires that others would make him drunk, and therefore, according to this rule misunderstood, he must make them so too ; for he must do to them as he would have them do to him. But this is a horrible perversion of the rule ; to prevent which, St. Augustine observes, that in the old Latin translation used in his time, the word ‘bona’ was put in, and the words read, *Omnia quæcunque vultis ut faciant vobis homines bona*, ‘All good things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you.’ And long before St. Augustine, St. Cyprian reads the words so too, and doubtless this is the true meaning of them. But there is no necessity of making any addition to the Greek text, or our translation of it, to make it bear this sense ; for when our Saviour here saith, Πάντα οὖν ὅσα ἂν θέλητε, ‘All things whatsoever ye would,’ He is plainly to be understood of all such things only which men can properly be said to will. But, as St. Augustine again observes, *Voluntas non est nisi in bonis*, ‘we properly will only what is good,’ evil not being the object of our will, but only of our lust. Or howsoever, our Saviour here supposes that our wills be so regulated by the principles or dictates of reason and religion, that we will nothing to ourselves but what is just in itself, and good for us. And what we thus will that men should do to us, we are also bound to do to them, according to this rule of our

Saviour. And therefore the Persian translation gives us the true meaning of these words, rendering them, by "Whatsoever you think it just and equitable that men should do to you, do ye even the same to them."

Now, the true meaning of these first words of this rule or canon being thus stated, we may see into the falsehood not only of the former, but likewise of many other conclusions which may be drawn from this rule falsely interpreted, as proceeding mostly from the mistake of these first words of it. For seeing our Saviour's saying, "all things whatsoever ye would," is not to be understood of such things as our corrupt and depraved wills lust after, but only of such things as our wills, guided by right reason and true religion, choose as really good for us; hence it follows, that whatsoever we will unreasonably or unjustly to ourselves, we cannot be bound by this rule to do the same to others, as being bound beforehand not to do it. As for instance; a judge sitting upon the bench hath a malefactor convicted of some capital crime standing at the bar before him, upon whom he is ready to pass sentence of death, according as he hath justly deserved; but before he pronounceth the sentence, he bethinks himself of this rule, whereby he is bound to do to the prisoner as he would have the prisoner do to him, supposing himself was at the bar in the prisoner's condition, and the prisoner upon the bench with his commission: and considers, that if he was the prisoner, he would willingly be released, and therefore thinks that by this rule he is obliged to release the prisoner. But this doth not at all follow from this rule, not only because the judge is pre-obliged to act according to law and justice, but also because the prisoner cannot, in reason and justice, will to be released, as being pre-supposed to have justly deserved death, and so cannot without injustice, or at least without the obstruction of justice, be released from it; though thus far questionless the judge is bound by this rule, even to be as just to the prisoner in his cause, as he would the prisoner should be to him, was he in the prisoner's, and the prisoner in his place.

Another instance may make the thing still plainer: supposing, any of you being walking in the streets, there comes an indigent person to you, and desires you to give him a



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hundred pounds : you deny ; but he pleads this rule, saying, If you wanted as much as I, and I had as much as you, you would desire that I should give you so much, and therefore you ought to give me so much ; for what you would that others should do to you, you should do the same to them. But now this doth not follow at all ; for although, if you was in his condition and he in yours, you might probably desire as much of him as he desires of you, yet your desires to him would be unreasonable, and so are his to you : for we suppose he hath no absolute necessity of so much money, and therefore he cannot so properly be said to will, as to covet it, his desire of so much proceeding from his corrupt inclination to the things of this world. But supposing a man to be in such circumstances that he is certain to starve, without your supplying him with so much as he hath absolute necessity of ; here the rule holds good, so that you are bound to supply him with it, for if you was in his condition and he in yours, you might justly and reasonably will that he should supply you ; and by consequence, you are obliged to supply him, because you are bound to “do to others, as you would that they should do to you,” in all things which your wills, regulated by the light of Scripture and reason, choose.

The next thing to be considered in my text, is the word “Men.” “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you.” Men, not God : and men in general, as men, not as lying under such and such particular obligations to one another ; for a father would have his children to obey him, but it doth not follow that he must obey his children. A master would have his servants do his work, but he is not therefore bound to do theirs. A prince would have his subjects submit to him, but he is not therefore obliged to submit to them ; because in those, and suchlike relations, there are particular obligations, which quite alter the case : for children are bound to obey their parents, servants their masters, and subjects their prince. But there is no such obligation on the other side, for a parent to obey his children, a master his servants, or a prince his subjects : and therefore neither can they be obliged to it by this rule, which obligeth us no further than to perform our other obligations to one another. And so, though it doth not oblige a parent to

obey his children, as he would have them to obey him, because there is no former obligation upon him to do it; yet it obligeth him to perform his duty as a father unto them, as well as them to perform their duty as children unto him; so that as he would that they should carry themselves as obedient children unto him, so is he bound by this rule to carry himself as a loving father unto them. The same may be said also of the other relations; but we must remember that this rule was intended for our carriage to one another, only as we are men; as we are all fellow-creatures and fellow-servants to the Most High God; and therefore, whatsoever other relation we may stand in to one another, take away that relation and the rule is still to be universally observed. As, suppose a servant to be sick, his sickness hath no relation to his service; and therefore in this case, his master is to deal with him as with his fellow-creature, and do to him as he would be done by was he in his condition; because we are bound to "do to others what we would that men should do to us." That is the next thing to be explained; for here, "by doing," we are not to understand only external actions, or our outward carriage to one another, but likewise the inward motions of our hearts, even our thoughts and affections to each other; for though human laws take no cognisance of what we think of, or how we are affected to each other, yet the Divine Laws do: and therefore, as we would that men should perform their inward as well as outward duties unto us, so are we to do the same to them. Which brings me to the last words to be considered, "Do ye even so to them." That is, unto the utmost of our power; for there are some cases wherein it may be impossible for a man to do so to others, as he may in reason will that others should do to him; as a man that really wants what is necessary for his present sustenance, he may justly desire that others should relieve him, though his own necessity makes him incapable of relieving others, and takes off his obligation to do it; for no man can be bound to do that which in itself is impossible for him to do: and therefore this rule must still be understood with this caution, that it be in our power to do such things to others as we would have others to do to us; which being supposed, "all

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things whatsoever we would that men should do to us, we are bound to do even so to them." As also on the other side, as Tertullian observes, 'As ye would not that men should do to you, so you must not do to them; or we must not do to others what we would not suffer ourselves.'

Thus we have considered the several words and expressions apart by themselves, which our Saviour used to express this general and comprehensive duty to us; from whence it is easy to gather the true meaning and purport of the whole, which in few terms amounts to this, that all things whatsoever we do, or can in reason and justice will or desire that men, as they are our fellow-creatures, should do either in thought or affection, in word or action for us, the same we are bound, unto the utmost of our skill and power, to do for them, even for all with whom we do converse. And whosoever doth thus, he fulfils and performs whatsoever the Law or Prophets require him to do to others; and by consequence, whosoever doth not observe this rule, inscribed first as the Law of Nature upon the hearts of all men, and afterwards transcribed by Christ Himself into His Gospel; I say, whosoever doth not observe this, transgresses all the Moral Law, so far as it respects our neighbour, and by necessary consequence as it respects God too, forasmuch as he lives in disobedience to His sacred and just commands; and so whosoever offends in this one point breaks the whole Law of God.

II. Now the several parts of this rule being thus explained, and so the true meaning of the whole found out, in the next place we are to consider how to apply it to our particular actions, and to make use of it in our whole life and conversation in this world, which I hope there is none of you but are very desirous to understand; forasmuch as if we fail in this we fail in all things else. And if we observe this rule aright, we shall do whatsoever either the Law written, or the Prophets inspired by God, require of us, in reference to our civil converse with one another, as our Saviour Himself here intimates unto us. Hence it is that I have used all the care and caution that I could, in giving you the true and genuine sense of these words, and shall do the like in shewing you how to use them, hoping that by



this time you do not only understand the general drift of them, but are likewise so convinced of the necessity of observing what our Saviour drives at in them, that you are resolved, by His assistance, not only to keep them always in your minds, but to use them upon all occasions whatsoever, to which they are any ways applicable. And let me tell you, there are no civil actions whatsoever betwixt man and man, but what should be ordered according to this rule; so that this is not a rule to be observed or made use of only now and then, but through the whole course of our lives, in all places and companies whatsoever. And it is that likewise which is always at hand; insomuch, that wheresoever you are, whatsoever you are about to do towards your neighbour, it is but turning your eyes inward, and there you may read the equity or injustice of it, only by considering whether you would be willing, all circumstances considered, that others should do that to you which you are about doing to them.

And, indeed, this is the way whereby we are to apply this general rule to our particular actions, even by observing only which way our own wills are inclined, and ordering our carriage and behaviour towards others accordingly, so as not to do any thing to others which we would that they should not to do us, and whatsoever we would that they should do to us, that we be sure to do the same to them. But seeing instancing in some particulars will conduce very much to your understanding how to apply this rule upon all occasions, I shall give you some examples both of what you would not, and what you would have done unto yourselves, by which you may clearly learn what you ought not, and what you ought to do to others.

First, therefore, do but consult your own hearts, and you may easily find that you would not have others have a bad opinion, or think evil of you; but whatsoever you are in yourselves, I am sure you would all be thought to be good by others: whence it is easy to infer that others also should be so esteemed by you; for as you would that others should think of you, so ought you to think of them. But you all would have others think well of you, and by consequence you are to think well of them too, which also is no more than what we are all bound in charity to do; for, as the

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1 Cor. 13. 5.  
1 Pet. 2. 17.

Apostle tells us, "charity thinketh no evil," yea, it is our duty likewise to "honour all men;" that is to have a good esteem and respect for all men; not to undervalue or despise any man whatsoever, as we desire that others should not undervalue or despise us. And what a rare world would it be, was this rule observed but in this one particular? What evil surmises, fears, and jealousies should we be freed from; how kindly should we then "be affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another." And verily, it is observable, that it is a breach of justice, as well as charity, not to observe this rule in this particular; for all men being made in the image of God, and designed to serve and enjoy Him, we are bound to believe all men to be good, and to answer the end of the creation; yea, they have a right and title to our good thoughts and opinions of them, unless they have forfeited it by being publicly convicted to be otherwise; even as our common law itself supposeth all men to be innocent of all crimes which they are not found to be guilty of, either by their own confession, or other proof, which are the only reasons that can justify our condemning others so much as in our very thoughts.

For, in the next place, there is none of you but would have others not believe all evil reports which may be raised of you; neither would you have your credit in the world, and your esteem amongst your neighbours impaired or lessened by such reports and surmises, as envy or malice may invent or spread abroad concerning you. Now, therefore, remember your Saviour's rule, and as you would not that others should believe every thing that is said of you, so likewise, do not you believe every thing that is said of others; neither let your opinion of, nor affection to your neighbour, be any ways abated by any flying reports, which you may hear of him: because some sin in raising scandals upon others, do not you sin too in believing of them; but whatsoever ill may be said of any one, you must be sure to hope and believe the best of all, until you have good information of the truth of what is said.

Furthermore, as ye would not that others should believe the ill they may hear of you, so I am confident there is none of you, but would that no man speak evil of you; you would

all, if possible, have every one's good word ; you would not have your ill deeds blazoned abroad, nor your good disparaged ; nor yourselves judged or condemned by others behind your backs, insomuch, that I dare appeal unto your own consciences, whether it be not the real will and desire of every soul of you not to be derided, scoffed at, reproached, or backbited, by others ; but to be well spoken of by all, and defended from such calumnies as may be thrown upon you.

Consider, therefore, what you would have from others, and do the same to them. What you desire is but just and good ; for God hath commanded that no man speak evil of you. But He hath commanded too, that you speak evil of no man. Thus the Apostle to St. Paul charges Titus to put men in mind “ to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, Tit. 3. 2. but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.” And I desire you to observe the reason he giveth for this command laid down in the next words ; “ for,” saith he, “ we ourselves ver. 3. also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceitful, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another ;” which reason why we should not speak evil of any man, is certainly of force to us now, as much as ever it was to any. For though some of us may be good now, be sure we were not always so ; for we were all born sinners, “ and are by nature the children of wrath as Eph. 2. 3. well as others.” Nay, we were not only born in sin, but every one that knows himself, and “ the plague of his own [1 Kings 8. 38.] heart,” must needs know himself to be a sinner still : neither is there any of you, but, I dare say, knows himself to be guilty of more sins than he can, or dare say, any man in the world besides himself is. And therefore, whatsoever sins God may permit others to fall into, remember yourselves that you are not only subject to the like passions, but guilty of as great, if not greater sins. And, as our Saviour said to them that brought the woman taken in adultery before Him, “ he that John 8. 7. is without sin amongst you, let him first cast a stone at her ;” so say I, when you hear of the sins which others have fallen into, let him that is “ without sin,” cast contumelious reproaches upon them : but then I am sure none here present can do it, nor any man upon the face of the earth ; for,

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Rom. 3. 23.

as the Apostle tells us, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" and therefore, until yourselves are free from sin, do not you upbraid or backbite others for it; for you would not have others do so to you. Remember your Saviour's words, "Judge not, that you be not judged:" and

Matt. 7. 1, 5.

"cast out the beam that is in your own eyes, before you talk of the mote that is in others." And remember this golden rule He hath given you in my text; and as you would not have others to talk against you, so neither do you talk against others behind their backs, but still observe this caution in your speaking of other men, even to speak of their virtues only behind their backs, and of their vices only before their faces.

In the last place: you would not that men should deceive, injure, circumvent, or overreach you in your civil commerce and dealing with one another; you would not have them use any tricks or artifices to blind your eyes, and cheat you in what you bargain for; you would have all men deal plainly, and above board with you: though a man be too cunning for you, and able to deceive you, you would not have him do it; but would have him deal with you as he would desire to be dealt withal himself, was you in his condition and he in yours. Now bring this home unto yourselves; and do not you do to others what you would not have others do to you. Would you not have others lie to you? You then must not lie to others. Would you not have others overreach you? Then you must not overreach others. Would you not have others defraud you? Then do not you defraud others. So

1 Thess. 4. 6.

saith the Apostle, "Let no man go beyond, or defraud his brother in any matter." And verily would you in all your civil contracts observe this rule, as near and exactly as possible you can, so as always to deal with others as you would have others deal with you, it would not only prevent many of those sins which you are liable to, if not guilty of, each day; but it would be a sovereign means, too, to bring a blessing upon your estates and families, and "to keep your consciences void of offence both towards God and man;" that when you come to lie upon your death-beds, the remembrance of your former sins may not be a greater torment to you than ever the profit you received by them was a plea-

[Acts 24.  
16.]



sure ; but you may be able then to reflect with joy and comfort even upon your dealings in the world, and say, that to the utmost of your power and knowledge you have always done to others, as you desired that others should do to you.

But to this end it is necessary, not only that you do not to others what you would not have others do to you, but likewise, on the other side, “that whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, you do even so to them.” As for example, none of you but may sometimes have done some wrong or injury to your neighbours, for which they may be justly angry and displeased with you, and may think of revenging themselves upon you for it : now, in this case, I know you would have such persons forgive all such wrongs which they may have received from you ; and to lay aside all thoughts of revenge, all hatred and malice against you, and to receive you into their favour, as much as if you had never been out of it. Now lay your hands upon your hearts, and do as you would be done by ; as you would have others pardon the wrongs that you have committed against them, so do you forgive the injuries which others have committed against you : for thus you are commanded too, in plain terms, even to “forbear one another,” and “to forgive one another, if any man hath a quarrel against another.” And if there was no express command at all for it, yet this general rule prescribed by our Saviour Himself, doth sufficiently enjoin us to forgive all affronts, abuses, or injuries, that we have received from any man. Colos. 3.13.

As also, in the next place, to love all : for if you do but know your own hearts, you must needs acknowledge, that every one of you would willingly be loved by all ; you would have no enemies in the world, but would have your very foes become your friends, and your adversaries to love you : for as we love ourselves, we cannot but desire to be beloved by others. Here, therefore, you may see the reasonableness of that command of our blessed Saviour, “Love your enemies ;” Matt. 5. 44. for it is no more than what we would have our enemies do to us ; and, by consequence, we ought to do so unto them. Whatsoever enemies any of you may have in the world, you would not have them continue so, but become your friends,

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and love you as much as they hated you before. Now by what you would have them do to you, you may easily gather what you are bound to do to them, even to love them, as you desire they should love you; and become their friends, as you would have them become yours. So that whosoever retains any malice or enmity against another, lives in the breach of this law of our blessed Saviour; for he doth not to others, as he would have others do to him.

Furthermore, as you would have the love of all, so you would willingly have all men to express their love unto you, not only in words, but deeds; by praying for you, by rejoicing and grieving with you; by discovering any mischief they know designed against you; by assisting you in your troubles; by congratulating your prosperity; by relieving you in your necessities; by keeping all the evil from you, and doing all the good unto you, that they can. These are the ways whereby you would all have your neighbours express their love and kindness to you. Now remember

1 Tim. 2. 1. your Saviour's command; and as "ye would that they should do to you, do ye even the same to them." Would you have them pray for you? Then you must pray for them. Would you have them rejoice and grieve with you, so as to be glad

Rom. 12. 15. at your welfare, and troubled for your troubles? Then you must rejoice and grieve with them. Would you have them be assistant unto you upon all occasions? Then you must be so to them. Would you have them help and relieve you in your necessities? Then you must do the like for them in theirs. In a word; would you have others do what good they can for you? Then you are bound by this rule to do what good you can for others. Your Lord and Master here expressly enjoining you to do to others, "whatsoever ye would that others should do to you."

In the next place, if you consult yourselves, you may easily find your wills inclined to receive from all men whatsoever they owe, or are indebted to you, either by the Law of God, or civil contracts. You would have all men pay you that respect and honour which may be due to your dignity or condition in the world. If any one hath obliged himself by promise or contract to pay you such a sum of money at such a time, you would have him be faithful, and punctual in the

performance of it. Such things as these are, you all know, in your own consciences, you are willing and desirous that all persons should do to you ; and consequently cannot but know yourselves to be obliged by this rule, to do the same to them : as also by the express command, “Render therefore Rom. 13. to all their due, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to 7. 8. whom custom, honour to whom honour, fear to whom fear. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another,” which is but a particular branch of this general duty, whereby we are bound to do to others, as we would have others do to us.

I shall instance only one thing more, which though it be rarely practised, or so much as thought of, yet it is of necessary consequence from this rule, and therefore necessary to be observed by us ; and that is this. I suppose there is none here present, but having had dealings in the world, you have some times suffered loss in it, not only by the Providence of God, but likewise by the wickedness of men ; who, either by open violence, or secret theft, or at least by cheating and cozenage, have got some part of your estates into their possession, and converted it to their own use. Now, although I believe there is none of you but some time or other have been thus unjustly deprived of some part of your earthly enjoyments, yet, I dare say, there is none of you but would willingly have restored to you again whatsoever hath been thus unjustly taken from you : and you may lawfully desire it ; for this is not coveting another man’s goods, but only desiring to have your own restored to you. Your own, I say ; for so they still are, though they be got into the other’s possession, as much as when they were in your own : he who hath them having then no more right or title to them than he had before he had them ; for another’s sin cannot take away my right ; and therefore, whosoever by any unlawful means hath gotten any thing from you, although he hath it in his possession, it is still as much yours, as it was before you lost it ; and therefore, the right being still in you, you may lawfully desire to be repossessed of it.

Here, therefore, let me desire you once again to bethink yourselves, and consider, whether you have not by some unlawful means or other, as perjury, lying, cozenage, or the



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like, gotten some of your neighbour's goods into your possession, and perhaps used them too for a good while. I accuse none, but only desire that every one would consult his own conscience in the case: and if, upon a diligent search and scrutiny, you find that you have any thing in your possession, which you came not lawfully by, give me leave to tell you, that it is none of yours; and you are bound to make restitution of it to its proper owner, from whom you got it, upon this very account, because you are bound "to do to others, as you would that others should do to you:" for I am confident there is none of you but would have others make restitution of what they have gotten wrongfully from you: and therefore there is all the reason in the world that you should make restitution of what you have gotten wrongfully from others; which also is no more than what the law itself doth absolutely require of you.

Levit. 6.  
2-5.

There are many other instances I might give of the use you are to make of this excellent rule prescribed by our blessed Saviour; but these may suffice to shew you the way how to apply it to your particular actions and civil converse with one another. And would you but begin with these particulars which I have already instanced in, all the rest would follow in course; and there is no duty that you owe to one another, but you would soon perform it; therefore let me desire you to set upon the practice of what you have heard at this time. First, do not you do that to any, which you would not that any should do to you; you would not that others should think ill of you; you would not that others should believe all the ill they hear concerning you, nor speak evil of you, nor injure, deceive or overreach you in any thing; and therefore, do not you do any such thing to others. And, on the other side, as you would that others should forgive the wrongs that you have done them; that others should love you, and that they should express their love unto you by doing you what good they can; and that others should pay what they owe you, and restore unto you whatsoever they have unjustly taken from you; as you would that others should do these things to you, so must you be sure to do the same to them without any collusion or equivocation whatsoever; which would you all be persuaded

to do, how happily should we live together: then there would be no such things as jars and tumults, no strifes and contentions, no discord or malice, no complaints of fraud and injustice; nothing but peace and concord, mutual love and amity amongst us; striving about nothing but who should be most pious to God, and most helpful and good to one another. This would be to live like Christians indeed: which that you may all do, let me beseech you in the name of Christ that came into the world to save you, that you would always carry this divine rule in your minds, which He hath been pleased to prescribe unto you, and endeavour to adjust all your civil actions and conversations with one another to it; as remembering that He Who hath commanded you to observe this rule, ere long will examine whether you have observed it or no, and judge you according to it. And if any of you shall still presume to live in the constant neglect of it, be it known unto you, it is not long but you will stand before His tribunal, Who hath enjoined it; and then you will wish that you had taken my advice, or rather obeyed His command in observing it. Whereas, if by the blessing and assistance of God, you shall for the future, unto the utmost of your power, do to all others as you would that others should do to you; Christ, Who hath commanded you to do it, cannot but be well pleased with you for doing it; and therefore will say unto you, “Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into your Master’s joy.” [Matt. 25. 21.]

## SERMON CXXX.

THE WORTHY COMMUNICANT.

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1 COR. xi. 29.

Ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων ἀναξίως, κρῖμα ἑαυτοῦ ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει, μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα τοῦ κυρίου.

*For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body.*

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[Acts 4.  
12.]

THERE being no name under heaven given among men whereby they must be saved but only the name of Christ; and there being no way to be saved by Him neither without believing on Him; hence man was no sooner fallen, but presently Christ was promised, and so made the object of his faith. Which promise being made to Adam, and so to man in general, all mankind were equally obliged and concerned both firmly to believe it, and also to express and exercise this their faith in their promised Saviour, by their frequent sacrificing of beasts to God, as types of that grand sacrifice which He was to offer for them. But, some time after, God having out of all the kindreds of the earth pitched upon Abraham for the person out of whose loins this His Son our Saviour should be born, He for that reason chose Abraham's posterity to be His Own peculiar people, as being more nearly related to Him in blood; to whom, therefore, He renewed and explained the foresaid promise more fully and clearly than to the rest of mankind; and to put them constantly in mind of what His Son was to suffer

for them, and so to strengthen and confirm their faith in His blood, He required them to slay and sacrifice some kind of beasts or other every day unto Him, as types and representatives of it. And having in a wonderful manner delivered them from the Egyptian bondage, wherein they had been detained many years, and thereby signified to them that eternal redemption which he designed for them, He enjoined them to commemorate the said deliverance once every year, by slaying, roasting, and eating a lamb in every family; which was so ordered that almost every circumstance in it represented some thing or other of what Christ was to suffer afterwards, as well as what God had before done for them; yea, the very manner of His death was plainly typified by it; for the Jews themselves acknowledge that the lamb was always roasted in such a posture, as to represent a person hanging upon a cross.

Now when the fulness of time was come, God, according to His promise, sent His Son into the world; Who, having for several years together conversed with mankind in their own nature, and taught them whatsoever was necessary for them to believe or do in order to their obtaining Eternal Salvation by Him; and being now ready to offer up Himself as a "propitiation for the sins of the whole world," the same night wherein He was betrayed in order thereunto, He, according to custom, ate the Passover or Lamb before spoken of, with His Disciples; and as they were eating, "He took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and gave it to His Disciples, saying, Take, eat: this is My body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me." As likewise after supper He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of this; for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me."

[1 Cor. 11.  
23-6; Matt.  
26. 26.]

These words our Saviour spake in the Syriac tongue, wherein there is no word that signifies 'to signify;' but whensoever they would say, 'this signifies such a thing,' they always used to say, 'this is such a thing.' And therefore the Apostles, to whom these words were spoken, could not but understand them according to the common way of

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[John 1.  
29.]

speaking then in use among them ; and so apprehend our Saviour's meaning to be, as if he should have said, the Paschal Lamb which we are now eating, hath hitherto, as ye know, typified the promised Messiah, " the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." I am that Messiah or Christ, that Lamb of God, who am now ready to offer up Myself for the sins of the world : and therefore this and all other sacrifices being only types of Mine, are now to cease in course : but that you as well as your forefathers, may always have something to put you in mind of Me, and of My death which I am to suffer for you ; behold, I now institute this sacrament in lieu of all other bloody sacrifices whatsoever ; so that, as this Paschal Lamb which we are now eating (and so all other bloody sacrifices) hath hitherto represented My death and passion to you ; so, from this time forward that which I have now done shall do it. For bread thus taken, and blessed, and broken, and distributed, as ye see Me do it, is now, and ever hereafter shall be My body, in the same sense as this Paschal Lamb hath hitherto been My body. And so also for the cup : wine thus blessed, as you have seen Me do it, is My blood, and shall be so to the end of the world, as really as the blood of the Paschal Lamb, or other sacrifices, hath been so till this time.

This seems to me so plainly to be the proper and natural meaning of our blessed Saviour in those words, that as I do not question but the Apostles understood them in this sense, so I cannot but wonder how it came into men's minds at first to put any other meaning upon them ; especially that the Papists should wrest them to such a sense, or rather nonsense, as to ground their absurd doctrine of transubstantiation upon them ; a doctrine never heard of, much less believed, in the primitive times.

But not to insist upon that now. It is further to be observed in these words, that although our Lord doth expressly command His disciples to do this in remembrance of Him, yet He doth not prescribe them any set times wherein to do it, nor acquaint them how oft He would have it done ; only in the institution of the cup He intimates, that He would have them do it often ; saying, " Do this, as oft as ye



drink it, in remembrance of me." And as the Jews, as oft as they offered any bloody sacrifices, foreshewed the Lord's death until his first coming; so Christians, as the Apostle tells us, "as oft as they eat this bread, and drink this cup, <sup>1 Cor. 11.</sup> they shew forth the Lord's death till His coming again." <sup>26.</sup>

But still there is no precise time or times prescribed for doing it by Christ or His Apostles: neither was it proper or convenient there should be. For if there had, there would have been an indispensable necessity laid upon all Christians to do it at all such times, whereas some Christians may at some times be in such places, and under such circumstances, that it may be morally impossible for them to do it.

But how then shall we know how often we are bound to receive this holy Sacrament? There are two ways to know it: from the practice of the holy Apostles and primitive Christians; and then from the reason of the thing, and the end of the institution.

First, We find the holy Apostles, who perfectly understood our Lord's mind, administering and receiving this holy Sacrament whensoever they met together upon a religious account; yea, so as that it seems to have been the principal end of their meeting, especially upon the Lord's Day: for it is written, "that upon the first day of the week, <sup>Acts 20. 7.</sup> when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow." From whence we may observe, that they received this Sacrament at least every first day of the week, which is the Lord's Day; and that the main end of their meeting upon that day, was not to hear sermons, but to break bread; only the Apostle being to depart on the morrow, took that occasion of preaching to them. And the same custom obtained, not only in the Apostles' times, but for many ages after; so that the primitive Christians looked upon this sacrament as the chief part of their public devotions; insomuch that they never held any religious assemblies, without the celebration of it; and if any one went away without receiving it, he was censured by the Church for it. Which plainly shews, that the Apostolical and primitive church understood our Lord's words in the institution of this Sacrament so, as that they looked upon themselves as obliged to do this in remem-

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brance of him, as oft as they met together to worship and serve God.

And verily he that considers the end of the institution, will find reason enough why they did ; and we ought to receive this Sacrament as oft as possibly we can : for seeing it was ordained in remembrance of Christ, and seeing we cannot possibly remember Him too often Who laid down His life for us, it must needs be our duty to do it as oft as we can, especially considering that the oftener we remember Him, the better we shall believe in Him. For by frequent receiving of His most blessed body and blood, that faith whereby we do it, being frequently exercised, is thereby more and more confirmed, and by consequence all other graces and virtues whatsoever being derived by faith from Him, are thereby made more strong and vigorous in us. And therefore all that seriously mind the concerns of another life, cannot but look upon it as their interest as well as duty, to take all opportunities they can of receiving this holy Sacrament, and to bless God for them. Be sure, He that came into the world on purpose to save us, would never have instituted it, but that He knew how necessary it was, and how much it would conduce to our Salvation by Him.

From hence, therefore, we may see what great reason our Church had to appoint the communion-service to be used every Lord's Day and holy-day in the year, that all her members, who desire it, might at all such times have an opportunity to receive this holy Sacrament. And so they generally did for some time after the Reformation. But now, if people do but receive it thrice a-year, and so avoid the penalty of the law, they think they do a great matter : as if we had no other obligations upon us to do it, but only from the laws of the land ; which is a sad instance of the great degeneracy of the age we live in, and how far we are fallen from the zeal and piety both of the primitive Christians, and our first reformers.

It is not my design at this time to search into the reasons why this great duty is so commonly neglected among us. But it may not be amiss to observe, that one great argument which the Devil and his agents make use of to deter men from it, is taken from these words which I have now read,



falsely understood, or at least not rightly considered. For seeing the Apostle here saith, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself," according to our translation; people have been made to believe, that, if they be not worthy to receive the Sacrament, and yet venture to do it, they are certainly damned. But that you may see how great and dangerous a mistake this is, I desire you to consider;

First, That this cannot possibly be the meaning of the words. For if so, no man ever did, or can receive the Sacrament, but he must be damned; forasmuch as no man ever yet was, or is, or will be, or can be worthy of so great a blessing. And certainly our Saviour would never command us to do that which we cannot do without being damned.

Moreover, the word which the Apostle here useth, *ἁγίμα*, doth not properly signify 'damnation,' as it is translated in the text, but only 'judgment,' as it is in the margin of your Bibles. And therefore the most that can be deduced from it, is, "that they who eat and drink unworthily" are obnoxious to the judgment of God for so doing, as all they are who either pray, or hear, or do any other duty otherwise than they ought to do it. And what kind of judgment the Apostle here means, he himself plainly declareth in the words following my text, saying, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep;" which are all temporal judgments, which God is often pleased to inflict for other sins as well as this; and are so far from eternal damnation, that they often prove the occasion of preventing it. [ver. 30.]

But that which is most of all to be considered is, what the Apostle means by "eating and drinking unworthily." For which we may observe, first, that he doth not say, he that, being unworthy "eateth and drinketh," but he that doth it unworthily, and so doth not speak so much of the qualifications of the person that doth it, as of his manner of doing it. And what he means by "eating and drinking unworthily," or after an unworthy manner, we may easily and fully understand both from the context and the text itself.

For, first, as to the context, the Apostle is here speaking of the great disorders which he had heard of among the

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ver. 20.

ver. 21, 22.

ver. 27.

[Heb. 10.  
29.]

Corinthians in their Christian assemblies; that there were divisions among them, even at those sacred times; and that though they intended to receive the Sacrament, they did not really do it. "When ye come together therefore," saith he, "into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper," where he plainly intimates what I observed before, that their main design of coming together, was to eat the Lord's Supper; but as they managed the business, they did not do it. "For," saith he, "in eating every one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken: What! have ye not houses to eat and drink in? Or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not?" From whence it is plain, that the sin which he here reproves in the Corinthians, was, that they ate the Lord's Supper as if it had been common food, without expressing any respect or reference to Christ's mystical body and blood; and as plain, that this is that which he here calls "eating and drinking unworthily." They carried themselves at the Lord's Table as if they had been at their own. The great and rich men ate and drank too much; the poor had nothing to eat and drink: whence the Apostle saith, "These were hungry, and the other drunk." And they who eat this bread, and drink this cup, after this unworthy manner, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, as the Apostle tells us; that is, they violate and profane Christ's mystical body and blood, and so are guilty, in a manner, of the same sin, as the Jews were in deriding and crucifying of Him: which also shews what kind of unworthy receiving the Apostle here speaks of, even such whereby they trampled upon the Son of God, and accounted the blood of the Covenant an unholy or profane thing, and behaved themselves accordingly in the receiving of it.

That this is the true sense of receiving unworthily, appears yet more plainly from the text itself. For here the Apostle saith, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation," or judgment, "to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." Which last words fully explain the former; for by them the Apostle shews wherefore they who eat and drink unworthily, eat and drink damnation to themselves, even because they do not discern the Lord's

body ; that is, they do not discern or discriminate Christ's body from common food, by taking it (*Veneratione singulariter debitâ*) with that veneration which is in a peculiar manner due to it, as St. Augustine explains the words. Neither indeed can they admit of any other exposition. And therefore, to receive unworthily in the Apostle's sense, is plainly nothing else but to receive irreverently and profanely, in a manner unbecoming Christ's body and blood, unworthy of so great a mystery as that is. As for people to deport themselves no otherwise at the Lord's Supper, than they do when they dine or sup at home, making no difference or discrimination betwixt that and their ordinary meals ; but eating this bread, and drinking this cup, as if it was not Christ's body and blood, but common meat and drink ; expressing no more regard or reverence towards it, than they do to bread or wine at their own tables ; this, which is but too common among some people, is that which the Apostle here calls " eating and drinking unworthily ;" and they who do so, instead of Christ's body and blood, which they do not discern, eat and drink damnation, or judgment, to themselves.

Epist. 118.  
ad Januar.

Having thus discovered what it is to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper unworthily, we may easily see what is required to the worthy receiving of it. But howsoever, it being a matter of so great importance, I shall endeavour to explain it more fully to you. For which purpose we must know, that although this worthy receiving, as it is opposed to the unworthy before spoken of, consists properly in the carrying and demeaning ourselves, both in our souls and bodies, at the Holy Sacrament, in a manner worthy and suitable to that body and blood which we there receive ; yet that we may do so, it is necessary that our minds be first rightly disposed and prepared for it. In order whereunto, the Apostle lays down this general rule, " But let a man ver. 28. examine (or prove) himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." But he doth not tell us particularly what it is that we must examine ourselves about : and therefore, for that our surest way will be to consult our Church, which, in her Catechism, acquaints us, that it is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper to examine themselves

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about three things: "1. Whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life? 2. Have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death? And 3. Be in charity with all men?" And accordingly, in the exhortation at the Communion she calls upon all the communicants actually to perform these great duties. And verily, these three things, Repentance, Faith, and Charity, are absolutely necessary to the qualifying us for the worthy receiving of Christ's body and blood, in the sense now explained.

1. For, first, unless a man be so sensible of, and sorry for his former sins, that he is now resolved for the future to forsake them, he cannot set that value upon Christ's dying for them, as is necessary to his carrying himself aright at the commemoration of it. For all the esteem and respect we have, or can shew to Christ, as dying for our sins, is grounded upon a due sense of these sins for which he died; which no man can in reason pretend to, that is not both truly humbled for them, and as steadfastly resolved against them. And therefore, the first thing that we ought to do in order to the fitting ourselves for the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper, is to look back upon our former lives, and consider seriously with ourselves what sins in thought, word, or deed, we have heretofore committed; and what duties to God or man we have hitherto neglected, and purpose with ourselves, by God's grace and assistance, that we will for the future do so no more; and so renew and ratify those vows and promises in this, which we made to God in the other Sacrament, even when we were baptized. He that doth this heartily and sincerely, is so far rightly prepared for the worthy receiving of that body and blood, which he thus repenteth of.

2. The next thing required, in order thereunto, is Faith, Heb. 11. 1. as it is according to the Apostle's description, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" whereby we are as fully persuaded that God will give us the good things He hath promised to us in Christ, as if we had them already; and are as certain of whatsoever He hath revealed, as if we saw it before our eyes. Without such a Faith as this, it is impossible for us to discern the Lord's body, and by consequence to receive it worthily. For all



that we see with our eyes is only bread and wine. Neither is it possible for us to look any further, but only by the eye of Faith, whereby we behold Christ's body and blood as broken and shed for us; and so verily and indeed receive, and apply it to ourselves. And therefore, in order to our worthy receiving the Holy Sacrament, we must take special care to examine ourselves, whether we be in the Faith, [2 Cor. 13. 5.] whether we really believe all the Articles of the Christian Religion, and have a sure trust and confidence on God's merciful promises for the pardon of our sins, and the Salvation of our souls by the blood of Christ: for the main stress of our receiving aright lies upon this, as we shall see more presently.

3. And then as for Charity, or a sincere and universal love to all men, without that no man is fit to appear before Him Who died for all men; much less to receive that body and blood which was offered up as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. For he cannot possibly give it that honour and respect which is due to it, by reason of his malice and hatred against some of those persons for which it was offered. And besides that, he that is not in love and charity with all men, it is plain that he doth not forgive the wrongs and injuries which he hath received from some men, and therefore is not capable to receive the pardon of his own sins from God, and by consequence not worthy to receive that Sacrament wherein it should be sealed to him. Wherefore, as ever we desire to receive it worthily, we must be sure to lay aside all malicious and revengeful thoughts against all persons whatsoever; and come with love as large, and of the same extent with that death which we there commemorate; as freely forgiving all others, as we desire that God, for Christ's Jesus' sake, should forgive us.

If we thus repent us truly for our sins past, have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour, amend our lives, and be in perfect charity with all men, we shall then be meet partakers of these holy mysteries, as our Church assures us. But for that purpose, we must not only have these graces beforehand, but we must likewise act and exercise them all the while that we are at our Lord's Table; which that we may do, our Church hath so contrived that incom-

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parable office which she hath made for the administration of the holy Communion, that from the beginning to the end there is continual matter and occasion given for the acting and exciting these Christian virtues in us, and so for our due and worthy receiving of Christ's most precious body and blood; which that I may demonstrate to you, and therewith shew how we may and ought to eat this bread, and drink this cup so duly and worthily, that we may not eat and drink judgment, but health and Salvation to ourselves, I shall briefly run through the whole office, beginning at the offertory.

Our minds, therefore, being rightly disposed and prepared for so great a work, by an humble confession of our sins, by fervent and solemn prayers to God for the pardon of them, and for grace to forsake them, by praising and magnifying His All-glorious Name, and by hearing some part of His Holy Word read and expounded to us, we then make bold to address ourselves to our Lord's Table, where the first thing we set about is to exercise our charity, and that two ways: first, by a liberal contribution of what God hath given us, to the relief of others' necessities; and then by praying for Christ's whole Catholic Church militant here on earth, whereby we do not only profess ourselves to be members of that society, and to live in communion with it, but likewise express our charity to all sorts of persons in it, as our Lord did, by praying for them.

After which the priest, in an exhortation composed for that purpose, puts the people in mind of the great benefit that will accrue to them, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith they receive that holy Sacrament, and of the greatness of the danger, if they receive the same unworthily; and therefore exhorts them to the exercise of the graces before-mentioned, and to give their humble and hearty thanks to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and Man, who humbled Himself to the death of the cross, that He might exalt us to everlasting life: and, that we might always remember His said death, and the benefits of it, instituted this holy Sacrament to our great and endless comfort; concluding with the great

obligation that lies upon us to bless God for this His inestimable love, and to shew forth His praise, not only with our lips, but likewise in our lives, by studying to serve Him in true holiness and righteousness all our days.

The exhortation ended, the minister invites all who are thus prepared to the Lord's Supper, saying to them, 'Draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort.' He invites them, first, to 'draw near,' thereby putting them in mind, that they are now invited into Christ's more special presence, to sit down with Him at His Own table; and therefore, as an emblem thereof, should come from the more remote parts of the Church, as near to the said table as they can. But then he adviseth them to 'draw near with faith,' as without which, all their bodily approaches will signify nothing, it being only by faith that they can really draw near to Christ, and take the holy Sacrament to their comfort. But seeing they cannot act their faith aright, until they have first confessed and repented of their sins; therefore he calls upon them 'to make their humble confession unto God, meekly kneeling on their knees.'

And now all that are to communicate, being prostrate upon their knees before God, do in a most humble and solemn manner jointly 'acknowledge and bewail their manifold sins and wickedness, which they from time to time have committed in thought, word and deed against His Divine Majesty;' professing themselves 'most earnestly to repent of them, humbly beseeching Almighty God to pardon what is past, and to grant them grace for the future to serve and please Him in newness of life, for Christ Jesus' sake.' All which is done with such grave, apposite, and pathetical words, that I do not see how it is possible for us to express our hearty and sincere repentance better than we do at that time.

And while the people continue in this humble posture, begging for mercy and grace at the hands of God, the minister stands up, and in the name of God assures them, that 'He of His infinite mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance, and true faith turn unto Him:' and therefore he applies the said promises to them, praying, that 'Almighty God would ac-



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cordingly have mercy upon them, pardon and deliver them from all their sins, confirm and strengthen them in all goodness, and bring them to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

And here it is that our faith must begin to work, as it is the substance of things hoped for, so as firmly and constantly to believe, that upon our hearty and sincere repentance we are now absolved from all our former sins, and that from this time forward God will assist us with His grace and Holy Spirit, to serve and please Him, according to the prayers which we have put up to Him, and the promises which he hath made to us for that purpose, in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: for all the benefit of absolution, as pronounced by the minister, depends upon this our believing in the promises and Word of God, upon which it is grounded.

Which, therefore, that we may do, the minister presently reads some choice sentences of Scripture, wherein God hath promised, or declared His willingness, to pardon and absolve us from our sins in the blood of His Son, that so we may act our faith accordingly upon them. And therefore he calls upon the people to hear, or hearken diligently to them, and take special notice of them.

Matt. 11.  
29.

As first, these comfortable words which our Saviour saith to all that truly turn to Him, "Come unto Me all that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."

Which words contain so firm and solid a foundation whereupon to build our faith, that if we be but truly penitent, we cannot doubt of God's mercy towards us. For here His only Son with His Own Divine mouth invites all that are so to come to Him, promising, or engaging His word, that He will refresh them, He will give them peace in their minds, quiet in their consciences, rest to their whole souls. He will take care that they neither "travel," or be "heavy laden" any longer with the burden of their sins; for He will refresh them with the sense of God's mercy in the pardon of all their faults, and with the assistance of His grace in the mortifying of all their lusts. Sin shall no longer have dominion over them, because they are not

Rom. 6. 14, now under the "Law," but under His "Grace."

Now these being the words of Christ Himself, we ought

to have a sure trust and confidence on them, so as to be fully persuaded, that we being in the number of those whom He calls, and having obeyed His call in coming to Him, He, according to His word, will ease us of our sins, and give us rest: especially considering that He Himself assures us with His Own mouth, that "God so loved the world, that John 3. 16. He gave His only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Which words, containing the substance and design of the whole Gospel, pronounced by Christ Himself, are therefore read in the next place, that we might have an occasion to exercise our faith in it all, and that no place might be left for diffidence or doubting: for seeing the great reason that moved God to send His Son, was His infinite love to mankind; and the only end why He did it, was, that "all that believe in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life," what can we desire more to excite and confirm our faith in Him? for "He that spared not His Own Son, but delivered Rom. 8. 32. Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

But lest the sense of our former sins should be apt to make us despond or despair of mercy, that nothing may be wanting to the completing of our faith at this time, there are two other Divine sentences read; the one of St. Paul, saying, "This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be 1 Tim. 1. 15. received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" and the other of St. John, "If any man sin we have 1 John 2. 1. an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins;" whereby we are given to understand and believe, that Christ came into the world on purpose to save such sinners as we are; and that He was made a propitiation for our sins, having undergone all that shame, and pain, and punishment which was due unto us for them, and is now our advocate in Heaven, always interceding for us, and ready to apply the merits of His death and passion to us. For what an occasion have we here given us to fix and exercise our faith, as St. Paul did, saying, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Rom. 8. 33, elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen 34.

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again; Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us."

Having thus exercised our faith, and so got above this world, we are now ready to go into the other, and join with the glorified Saints and Angels in praising and adoring that God that hath done so great things for us; which that we may do, the minister calls upon the people to lift up their hearts. And their hearts being now by faith wholly inclined to God, are as ready to do it, as he is to desire it; and therefore immediately answer, "We lift them up unto the Lord." And now, their hearts being all lift up together, and so fitted for celebrating the high praises of God, the minister invites them all to join with him in the doing it, saying, "Let us give thanks unto our Lord God;" which they having consented to, saying, "It is meet and right so to do;" he turns himself to the Lord's Table, and acknowledges to his Divine Majesty there specially present, that "it is very meet and right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto Him." And then he, looking upon himself and the rest of the communicants as members of the Church triumphant in Heaven; and all apprehending themselves, by faith, as in the midst of that blessed society, where they hope ere long to be indeed, they join with them in singing forth the praises of the most High God, saying, "Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name," &c. And certainly, if ever our souls be in Heaven while our bodies are upon earth, it must needs be in the singing of this heavenly anthem; when our spirits, with those of just men made perfect, yea, with the whole company of Heaven, in so solemn and seraphic a manner adore and magnify the Eternal God our Maker and Redeemer. Especially when we celebrate the Nativity, the Resurrection, and Ascension of our blessed Lord, His mission of the Holy Ghost, and the most holy Trinity, for which there are proper prefaces appointed, to raise up our hearts as high as possible, in praising God for such transcendent mysteries and mercies as these are.

And now, if ever, our minds must needs be duly prepared to receive the blessed body and blood of our dear Lord; and

therefore the minister having first acknowledged our unworthiness of so great a mercy, and prayed to God to assist us with His grace to receive it worthily, he then saith the prayer of consecration.

And now there is nothing either said or done, but what puts us in mind of something or other whereupon to employ and exercise our faith.

When we see the bread and wine set apart for consecration, it should mind us of God's eternal purpose, and determinate counsel, to send His Son into the world, and to offer Him up as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

The minister's reading the prayer of consecration alone, none of the people speaking a word, nor any ways assisting him in it, should put us in mind how the whole work of our Salvation was accomplished by Christ alone, no mere creature contributing any thing at all towards it.

When we hear these words, "Who in the same night that He was betrayed, took bread;" we are by faith to behold our Lord at His last supper, there instituting this Sacrament which we are now to receive, and distributing it to His Apostles with His Own blessed hands.

When we see the bread broken, then we should call to mind all that grief and pain, those bitter agonies and passions which our Lord suffered for our sins, and in our stead. How He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, that by His stripes we might be healed; how His blessed body was broken, His hands and feet fastened to the cross with nails drove through them, and all for our sins, even for ours.

And so when the minister takes the cup into his hand, then we are by faith to behold how fast the blood trickled down from our Lord's head, when crowned with thorns; from His hands and feet, when nailed to the cross; from His side, when pierced with the spear; and from His whole body, when He was in His agony; and all to wash away our sins; still believing that it was for our sins that all this precious blood was shed; for such and such sins, which we know every one ourselves to have been guilty of.

When we hear our Lord's words pronounced, the words



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of consecration, "This is My body which is given for you;" and "This is My blood which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins;" then are we steadfastly to believe, that although the substance of bread and wine still remain, yet they are not now common bread and wine as to their use, but the body and blood of Christ, in that sense that He spoke the words; insomuch that "whosoever duly receives these creatures of bread and wine according to Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of His death and passion, are partakers of His most precious body and blood;" as it is expressed in the words of consecration.

When we see the minister distributing this sacramental bread and wine to the several communicants, we are then by faith to apprehend our Lord offering His body and blood, and all the benefits of His death and passion, to all that are willing and ready to receive them at His hands.

But when it comes to our turns to receive, then we are to lay aside all thoughts of bread, and wine, and minister, and of every thing else that is, or can be seen; and fix our faith, as it is "the evidence of things not seen," wholly and solely upon our blessed Saviour, as communicating His Own body and blood to us, to preserve both our bodies and souls to everlasting life. Which we are therefore to receive by faith, as it is "the substance of things hoped for;" steadfastly believing it to be what our Saviour said, "His body and blood, which," as our Church saith, "is verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." By which means, whatsoever it is to others, it will be to us who receive it with such a faith the substance of Christ's body and blood, and so of all the good things we hope for upon His account.

And the better to excite and assist us in the exercise of our faith, after this manner, at our receiving the sacramental bread and wine, the minister, at the distribution of it, first applies the merits of Christ's death in general to each particular person that receives it, saying to every one singly, "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, and the blood which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life," that so I may apply it to myself as the body and blood of Him that loved me, and



gave Himself for me, to “preserve my body and soul to everlasting life.” And then he adds at the distribution of the bread, “Take, and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving.” Whereby I am put in mind to eat it in remembrance that Christ died for me in particular, and then am taught how to feed upon Him, even in my heart by faith with thanksgiving. In my heart, because it is not bodily, but spiritual food : and by faith, as the only means whereby the heart or soul can take its proper nourishment, and receive the substance of things here hoped for, even the body and blood of Christ. And then it must be with thanksgiving too, as the necessary consequent of faith. For as no man can be truly thankful to and for Christ, without actually believing in Him : so no man can actually believe in Him, but he must needs be truly thankful both to and for Him. And therefore, in the distribution of the cup, after the words, “Drink this in remembrance that Christ’s blood was shed for thee,” it is only added, “And be thou thankful :” because this necessarily supposeth and requireth our feeding upon Him in our heart by faith, as without which it is impossible for us to be truly thankful.

And hence also it is, that the Church requires us to receive the holy Sacrament kneeling, not out of any respect to the creatures of bread and wine in themselves, but to put us in mind that Almighty God our Creator and Redeemer, the only object of all religious worship, is there specially present with us, offering His Own body and blood to us, that so we may act our faith in Him, and express our sense of His goodness to us, and of our own unworthiness of it, in the most humble posture that we can. And indeed, could our Church be sure that all her members would receive as they ought with faith, she needed not have commanded them to receive it kneeling, for they could not do it any otherwise. For how can I pray in faith to Almighty God to preserve both my body and soul to everlasting life, and not make my body, as well as my soul, bow down before Him ? How can I by a quick and lively faith behold my Saviour as coming to me, and offering me His Own body and blood, and not fall down and worship Him ? How can I by faith lay hold

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upon the pardon of all my sins, as there sealed and delivered to me, and receive it any otherwise than upon my knees? I dare not, I cannot do it. And they that can, have too much cause to suspect that they do not discern the Lord's body, and therefore cannot receive it worthily. Be sure our receiving the blessed body and blood of Christ, as the Catholic Church always did, in an humble and adoring posture, is both an argument and excitement of our faith in Him: by it we demonstrate to the world and our own consciences, that we discern the Lord's body, and believe Him to be really present with us: and by it we excite and stir up both ourselves and others to act, and exercise our faith more steadfastly upon Him, in that by our adoring of Him we actually acknowledge Him to be God as well as man; and therefore an all-sufficient Saviour, "Who is able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by Him;" and by consequence One Whom we have all reason in the world to believe and trust on.

[Heb. 7.  
25.]

And then, lastly, when we have thus spiritually eaten the flesh of Christ, and drunk His blood, then we are firmly to believe, and rest fully satisfied in our minds, that according to His Own words, Christ now dwelleth in us, and we in Him; that Christ is one with us, and we with Him: and, therefore, that God hath now sealed to us the pardon of all our sins, and will enable us for the future, by His Own Spirit, to walk in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life; which faith we are still to exercise all the while that others are receiving; adoring that Infinite Goodness that is so free and ready to communicate Itself to such unworthy creatures as we are.

[John 6.  
56.]

And when all have received, with the same humble confidence we address ourselves to our Heavenly Father, as now reconciled to us in His Own Son, in that Divine form of prayer which He Himself, Whose body and blood we have now received, was pleased to compose, and require us to use upon all occasions. After which having added another prayer proper for this great and solemn occasion, we join together in saying or singing that incomparable hymn, "Glory be to God on high," &c.; the first part whereof was sung by the quire of Heaven at our Lord's

nativity, and the rest added by the Primitive, if not by the Apostolical Church, it being the most ancient hymn that we know was ever used both by the Greek and Latin Churches all along; and if ever we be fit to praise God in so seraphic a manner, it must needs be at this time, now that Christ dwelleth in our hearts by faith, and so assists us in the doing of it. But for the performing it aright, it is necessary to keep our minds all the while intent and fixed upon the great God and our blessed Saviour, to whom we speak in a peculiar manner, and with the eye of faith to look upon Him as there present with us, and observing how earnestly we beseech Him, the “Lamb of God Which taketh away the sins of the world, to have mercy upon us;” and how heartily we adore and magnify His sanctity, His authority over all things, and His, together with His Holy Spirit’s, infinite height in the glory of God the Father.

After all which duly performed, having prayed for God’s acceptance of what we have done, and for His blessing upon us, we are accordingly dismissed, as well as may be, with the “peace of God which passeth all understanding:” and with “the blessing of God Almighty the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” which will certainly be and remain with those who thus receive the holy Sacrament always.

Thus we now see how we may and ought to receive the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper worthily. Blessed, and thrice happy are they that do it, and that do it often: for the oftener we do it, the more expert we shall be at it, and the more benefit and comfort we shall receive from it. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for them who do it only now and then, ever to do it as they ought: and therefore it is no wonder they are never the better for it; it is rather a wonder if they be not much the worse. It is by frequent acts that habits are produced: it is by often eating and drinking of this spiritual food, that we learn to do it so as to digest and convert it into proper nourishment for our souls, that they may grow thereby; which the primitive Christians, and the Apostles themselves, were so sensible of, that they made this a necessary and essential part of all their public devotions; at least, they never reckoned that they kept the Lord’s Day aright in remembrance of His resurrection,

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unless they had been at His Table, to do this in remembrance of His death and passion. And could this Primitive, this Apostolical practice be once revived amongst us, our Church would soon put on a new face, and appear as excellent in its members as it is in its constitution; for by this means we should soon arrive at that degree of grace and virtue, as to be and live as becometh Christians indeed; that is, the most holy, most righteous, and most excellent persons upon earth, such as the primitive Christians were, and such as we must be, if ever we desire to go to Heaven.

What, therefore, if the laws of the land do not absolutely require all men to communicate oftener than thrice a-year? The only reason why they require it at all is, that all people may thereby manifest themselves to profess the Christian religion established in the nation: for no human laws can look any farther; and yet even for that, it is judged necessary, and therefore commanded, that all persons should communicate at least thrice a-year; and all Priests and Deacons in cathedral and collegiate churches, every Sunday at least; which if they neglect to do, they are looked upon as no Christians, and therefore are cast out of the Church. But if so much be necessary to the very outward profession of our most holy religion, what shall we think of the practice of it? Certainly nothing less is required to that, by the laws of Christ and His Church, than to communicate as often as we can possibly find an opportunity; and to make one where we find none, by requesting, and if need be, by requiring the minister of the parish where we live, to administer it to us: who neither in law nor conscience can refuse it, when requested by a sufficient number of communicants.

I shall say no more, but that I never expect to see our Church settled upon the lasting foundations of peace and piety, till the holy Communion is oftener celebrated and received than for some years past it hath been used to be; and am sure, that if people were but sensible of the advantage it would be to them, they would need no other arguments to persuade them to the frequent receiving of it. For we should soon find, as many have done already, by experience, that this is the great means appointed by our blessed Sa-

viour, whereby to communicate Himself, and all the merits of His death and passion, to us ; insomuch that by a due and frequent receiving of this holy Sacrament, our souls would be as much strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by bread and wine ; and we should receive such constant supplies of grace and virtue from Him, whereby we should be enabled not only to avoid the sins and follies of this lower world, but always to live above it, and to have “our conversation in Heaven.” [Phil. 3. 20.] In short, by our frequent conversing with our blessed Lord at His Table here below, we shall be always fit and ready to go to Him, and converse with Him in His Kingdom above, where we shall have no more need of Sacraments, but shall see Him face to face, and praise and adore Him for evermore.

“ The peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord : and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. Amen.”



## SERMON CXXXI.

THE GOSPEL UNPROFITABLE ONLY THROUGH UNBELIEF.

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HEB. iv. 2.

*For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them :  
but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed  
with Faith in them that heard it.*

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HE that duly considers the excellency of the Gospel, what clear discoveries it makes of God's will and man's duty, what an exact pattern and example of all true piety and virtue it sets before us in the Life of Christ, what promises and overtures of grace and assistance it makes to all that truly believe in it; and what strong assurances it gives us, that if we do what we can, God will be well pleased with what we do, and in Christ accept of our sincerity instead of perfection, and crown our weak endeavours with nothing less than eternal glory; so that they that are truly holy in time shall be perfectly happy for ever: I say, he that seriously considers these things, may justly conclude, that wheresoever the Gospel is preached, it must needs work a thorough reformation in them that hear it, so as to prevail upon them to devote themselves wholly to the service of the Living God, and to the sincere performance of all such virtuous and good works as He requireth of them; and, by consequence, that all they which enjoy the Gospel, should not only be good, but the very best of men, far exceeding all others in a sincere, universal, and constant obedience to all the laws and commands of God.

But if, on the other side, he considers withal, that they that not only enjoy the Gospel, but do, or at least may read it, or hear it read or preached every day, so as to be thoroughly acquainted with all the truths therein revealed, all the laws therein enjoined, all the threatenings therein denounced, all the promises therein made, both of present assistance and acceptance in this world, and also of eternal happiness in the world to come: he that considers, I say, that even such persons as these are, to whom the Gospel is so clearly preached and made known, should be as much corrupt in their principles, as much debauched in their practices, as much addicted to the things of this world, as covetous of its riches, as ambitious of its honours, as desirous of its pleasures, as unthankful for mercies, as impatient under sufferings, as passionate, as malicious, as censorious of one another, as proud, as luxurious, as earthly-minded, as unjust in their dealings, as uncharitable to the poor, and every way generally vicious and wicked, as they that never yet heard of the Gospel, or have it not so plainly discovered to them as these have; such a one may justly admire what should be the reason of this so great disparity betwixt the lives of those that profess the Gospel, and the Gospel itself, which they do profess: and how it should come to pass, that the Gospel which is so frequently, so clearly, and so fully preached amongst us, should have so little, or no effect upon them that hear it? or why it should not be as powerful and prevalent now as it was when it first began to be preached? At St. Peter's preaching of one short sermon, Acts 2. 41. concerning the truth and excellency of the Gospel, there were no fewer than three thousand souls converted; whereas now, at the preaching of three thousand sermons, or at the hearing of the same sermon of St. Peter read or preached three thousand times over, we have just cause to fear there is scarce one soul converted. But men can now sit and hear the whole doctrine of the Gospel explained, Christ's sufferings for sin opened, the reasonableness and excellency of all Christian graces, and moral virtues unfolded; Hell with all its miseries threatened to the impenitent and disobedient, and Heaven with all its glories promised to them that repent and believe the Gospel; and yet be no more,

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nor scarce so much affected with it, as the Heathens were with the Oracles of Apollo, or the Turks with the Alcoran of Mahomet. But people can come to church, and perhaps many of them can make a shift, though with much ado, to sit out a sermon, and hear what is said concerning Christ, and His Gospel, or concerning their duties to God and one another, and then go home again, and pass their censures upon what they have heard, and then trouble their heads no more about it: as if they were not at all concerned about the Gospel, any farther than to hear it read, or preached to them: and therefore, although they hear it over and over again, it is all one, sinners they were, and sinners they will be, let the Gospel say what it will.

But what! Hath the Gospel lost its power and force? Is it become less effectual to the Salvation of mankind than heretofore? Is its light eclipsed, or its heat abated? Is the virtue of Christ's blood ceased, or His Cross now made of none effect? Is He able to save no more than He hath done already? Or is His Gospel come to an end, and so must be the means of Salvation no longer to us? No, this cannot be: for the Gospel was to last, and Christ will be with the preachers of it, unto the end of the world; Matt. 28. 20. "Behold," saith He, "I am with you unto the end of the world;" and therefore the Gospel will most certainly continue in force and power, so long as the sun and moon endure. And [Heb. 13. 8.] "Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" always ready to assist at the preaching, and to promote the embracement of His Gospel; so that the truths He hath delivered are as forcible, His doctrines as efficacious, His promises as faithful now as ever; and therefore there can be nothing of failure or decay, either in the Gospel itself, or in any thing else that belongs unto it.

But what then should be the reason that the Gospel nowadays makes so little alteration in their lives and manners that hear it preached to them? Are men grown more dull and heavy, more senseless and ignorant of their affairs and concerns, than formerly they were? Do they only hear a sound of words, but are so stupid as not to understand the meaning of them? This can by no means be alleged in these days, wherein men pretend to more knowledge in all

the arts and sciences, and to more cunning and subtilty in their dealings, than ever their forefathers had ; there being no sort of learning but what hath been very much improved, or at least is esteemed to be so, in this very age we live in : and, as for trading and trafficking in the world, it is certainly carried on with far more witty and artificial devices of cheating than ever our forefathers dreamed of.

But why, then, is it that men in our days should have the Gospel amongst them, and yet be so little bettered by it ? Is it because, though they have it amongst them, yet it is not so often preached, or expounded to them, at least not so clearly and fully as it used to be ? Hath there any Spanish or Popish Inquisition been amongst us, whereby the people have been forbid to read the Gospel, or their Bibles have been taken from them ? Or, have our preachers been thrust into corners, and not been permitted to explain and apply the Gospel to us ? Hath it been now, as heretofore, a rare thing to hear a sermon ? Or, have the sermons, that have been preached, been so dark and obscure, or so dull and impertinent, so empty and frivolous, that the doctrine and duties of the Gospel could not be learned from them ? Surely England, of all the nations of the world, can never plead this, especially for this last age, wherein there have been more sermons preached than had been in all the ages since our Saviour's time before ; and more than in any other nation in the world besides, in the same compass of time ; and that too in as plain and familiar a way as the Gospel was ever preached since the Apostles' times. And besides that, this nation is so far from being able to make any such plea or excuse for themselves, that the people generally look upon themselves as understanding the Gospel far better than ever their fathers did ; accounting the Fathers themselves but novices in comparison of them ; and pretending to so much light and knowledge in the Gospel, that they far excel and surpass all that went before them.

But how then comes it to pass, that the Gospel should be so clearly preached, and yet all manner of heresy, wickedness, debauchery, and hypocrisy, so rife amongst us ? Why, the Apostle in my text gives us the reason of it in few terms ; "The Word preached doth not profit them, not being mixed



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with faith in them that hear it.” The Christian Religion, through the goodness and mercy of Almighty God, is the professed religion of the whole nation, transmitted to us from our ancestors, and established by the laws of the land ; whereby it comes to pass that the Gospel is ordinarily read and preached amongst us, and we give it the hearing, and take it for granted that we believe it, but really do not ; for if we did, we could not but live up unto what is prescribed in it. So that all the reasons that can be brought for the manifold vices and enormities committed by them that enjoy and profess the Gospel, must still be resolved into this one, even into the unbelief or infidelity of them that hear it ; so that the generality of Christians themselves, even all such as do not sincerely perform their duty both to God and man, according to the Gospel, may justly be accounted and called infidels : as I shall endeavour plainly to discover from these words, wherein the Apostle doth clearly and expressly impute the unsuccessfulness of the Gospel only unto the want of faith, saying, “ For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them ; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”

[Heb. 3.  
19.]

For the opening of which words, we must consider, how the Apostle having proved in the foregoing chapter that there was a rest promised to the people of God, and that unbelief was the only reason that kept them out of it : he therefore exhorts all to have a care lest they should miss of it upon the same account. “ Let us therefore fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it :” and then he gives the reason of his advice in the words of my text ; “ For,” saith he, “ unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them :” that is, it is the same Gospel that is preached to us and to them ; but seeing they received no benefit from it, nor were admitted into the rest promised in it, merely upon the account of their unbelief, we have cause to beware, that the same reason do not hinder us too from partaking of it.

From whence we may observe, by the way, against the Socinians, that the same promise of future rest was made, and the same Gospel preached in the Old as in the New Testament ; and that they that lived before, as well as they



that live since the coming of our Saviour, were saved only in and through Him. For the Apostle having in the foregoing chapter cited these words of the Psalmist, "To-day if Heb. 3. 7. you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts;" he afterwards asserts, that not believing that voice was the reason why God swore, "They should not enter into His rest;" and v. 18. then, in my text, says, that "the Gospel was preached to us, even as well as to them;" and by consequence it behoves us, as well as it did them, to have a care of not believing it. From whence nothing can be more plain than that the Apostle interprets the voice of the Lord there spoken to, to be the Gospel; and that the same Gospel was preached to them, which is now preached to us. There are many places of the like importance, both in the New and Old Testament; from whence any one, that doth not wilfully shut his eyes against the light, may clearly discover both the certainty and necessity of this truth. But this not being that which I principally intend at this time, I shall waive it for the present, only minding you of one place, which St. Peter also quotes to this purpose; when, having told the rulers and the elders of the Jews that it was only by the Name of Christ that he had cured the man lame from his mother's womb, he presently adds out of the same Psalmist, "This is the stone Acts 4. 11. which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner;" that is, this person whom you have so far despised, as to crucify Him, it is He, and He alone, upon Whom our Salvation depends: "neither," saith he, "is v. 12. there Salvation in any other; for there is none other Name under heaven, given amongst men, whereby we must be saved."

Now, the Apostle having thus asserted the preaching of the Gospel in all ages, he shews the reason why it did not profit all them that heard it, even because of their unbelief. "But the word preached," saith he, or the word of hearing, as it is in the original, that is, the promise of pardon and Salvation in the Messiah, which was made, and they had heard from God, "it did not profit them;" it had not that effect upon them as to lead them to everlasting rest, "not being mixed with faith in them that heard it;" that is, not being assented to or believed as it ought to have been by

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them that heard it: for, “not being mixed with faith,” is a metaphorical expression, taken from the mixing of liquors, or rather potions, wherein, if any necessary ingredient be wanting, the whole becomes ineffectual. So the promises of the Gospel, howsoever full and certain they are in themselves, howsoever clearly and faithfully they are made known to others; yet unless they be received by faith, they will be noways beneficial or profitable to them.

This, therefore, being the true and proper meaning of the words, it is obvious to observe, that the Apostle here ascribes it only unto the want of faith, that the Gospel doth not profit them that hear it: that the fault is not to be laid upon the Gospel that is preached, but upon them that hear it; and upon nothing else in them neither, but only their not believing what they hear. So it was in the former days, and so it is in ours: the Gospel is preached, and people flock to hear it; but it generally hath no influence upon them, nor does them any good at all, because they do not really believe what they hear; which, I fear is the case of too many amongst us, who perhaps have lived this forty, fifty, or sixty years in the world, where the Gospel hath been preached; and they have been constant, and perhaps very zealous hearers of it too, and yet have received no real benefit at all from it, being still as proud and covetous, as hypocritical and uncharitable as ever. And all because, although they hear it over and over again, yet they do not really, they do not thoroughly believe it: and therefore it is no wonder that they are no better for it, it being impossible both that the Gospel should profit any one that doth not rightly believe it, and that it should not profit them that do.

These, therefore, are the two things which I must endeavour to prove; 1st. That the Gospel will no way profit us without faith; and then, 2dly. He that doth truly believe in it, cannot but receive extraordinary profit and good by it.

For the opening of the first; we must first consider what we are here to understand by the Gospel, or Word preached. In brief, by the Gospel here we are to understand the whole system of Evangelical revelations, delivered to us by Christ and his Apostles, consisting of several truths asserted, acts of several persons recorded, duties enjoined, sins forbidden,

threatenings denounced against the disobedient, and promises of pardon and acceptance made to those that repent and believe. All which are comprehended under the general notion of the Gospel, taken in its fullest extent and latitude: and therefore the belief of the Gospel implies the belief of all these things as contained under it, and revealed in it: neither can any one be said to believe one of them, that doth not truly believe all; there being the same ground to believe all, as there is to believe any one of them: so that he that believes the Gospel cannot but believe all in it.

And so I come to the second thing to be considered, and that is, what it is to believe in a Gospel sense, or what is that faith, without which the Gospel will avail us nothing. That such an act as faith is required by the Gospel, is a thing you all know; there being no one duty so frequently pressed and inculcated as this. "Repent and believe the Gospel," was not only the first sermon that our Saviour preached, but it was the sum and substance of all the rest; yea, and the only reason why the Gospel was committed to writing, was, that we "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, John 20. 31. the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through His Name. Now to find out what that faith is, which the Gospel requires of us, our best and surest way is to consult the Gospel itself, and such as were the first preachers of it to the world, I mean the Apostles; one whereof gives us this plain description of it, "Faith Heb. 11. 1. is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, which being certainly the true notion of that faith, which the Gospel enjoins, it deserves our more serious consideration. Here, therefore, the Apostle describes faith by its internal form, and external object; the internal form he expresses by two words, ὑπόστασις and ἔλεγχος, 'substance' and 'evidence;' the external objects are "things hoped for, and not seen." First, saith he, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." It is the substance, not in a physical, but a moral sense: it is so the substance of things hoped for, that it makes them really subsist in the mind and heart of him that believes: so that he looks upon them as certain as if he had them already in possession; which is notably exemplified in the Patriarchs, Abraham,

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Heb. 11. 13.

Isaac, and Jacob, of whom he saith, "These all died in Faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them;" where we may plainly see how Faith is the substance of things hoped for. God had promised to give them the land of Canaan for an inheritance; and therefore, though they all died before they inherited it, yet they could not but hope for it; and by Faith they were so persuaded that the land should be theirs in their posterity, that themselves embraced it, reckoning themselves already possessed of it. And so Faith was the substance of what they hoped for. Neither is it only "the substance of things hoped for, but the evidence of things not seen;" that is, it presents things not seen, whether past, present, or to come, as really before our eyes, as if we saw them. Thus Noah, by faith, saw the flood many years before it came, because God had said it should come. Thus Abraham by Faith saw the city, "which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." Thus Joseph by Faith saw the children of Israel departing out of Egypt. Thus Moses by Faith saw Him that is invisible. Thus it is that by Faith "we look not at those things which are seen, but at those which are not seen."

Heb. 11. 7.

ver. 10.

ver. 22.

ver. 27.

2 Cor. 4. 18.

This, therefore, is the faith which the Gospel requires, even such a faith whereby we are as fully persuaded of the truth of what God hath promised or asserted in His Gospel, as if we saw it fulfilled or verified before our eyes; nothing doubting but what He promises is most absolutely certain, and what He saith most perfectly true: and without such a faith, as "it is impossible for us to please God," so it is impossible for God's Word to profit us.

[Heb. 11.  
6.]

Which brings me to the last thing to be considered, even the reason why the Word preached cannot profit, unless it be mixed, or received with such a faith as this; which we may despatch in few words. For, besides that the promises of the Gospel are all made with this proviso, that we believe in them, and by consequence will never be fulfilled without it; I say, besides that, the Gospel being purely of Divine revelation, it cannot be the object either of our sense or reason; and therefore can have no real existence or subsistence as to us, but only by faith; and by consequence can



have no influence at all upon us, nor afford any benefit at all to us. We never saw Christ either born or crucified; we never saw Him doing or suffering any thing; we never saw Him rising from the grave, or ascending up to Heaven; neither can we conclude by reason from any premises whatsoever, that Christ came into the world to die for our sins, and that in and through Him our transgressions shall be pardoned, and our persons accepted. The certainty of these, and the like truths, depends merely upon the testimony and Word of God Himself; which we are therefore only bound to believe, because He asserts them. But now he that doth not believe them, it is all one to him, whether they had been asserted or no. For what if Christ said, that “unless Luke 13. 3. ye repent, ye must all likewise perish?” he that doth not believe it, will repent never the sooner because Christ said it. And what if He said, “Come unto Me, and I will give Matt. 11. 28. you rest?” he that doth not believe that he may have rest in Him, will never go unto Him for it. And what if the Gospel threaten Hell and damnation to the impenitent and disobedient, and promise Heaven and Everlasting Life to them that repent and believe in Christ? What signifies this to one that doth not believe it, or think it true? He will be no more affected with Hell-fire than with painted flames; with Heaven’s Glory no more than with a fool’s Paradise: for whatsoever the Gospel saith, he believes no such thing. And therefore it is impossible that such a one should receive any profit by hearing of the Word, seeing he doth not believe what he hears to be really true. And hence it is that people come so frequently to Church and hear of God and Christ, of Heaven and Hell, and suchlike things; but not fully being persuaded of the truth of what they hear, they go as they come, without being bettered by it, which otherwise could not be.

II. Having thus discovered that the Word preached cannot profit us unless we believe it, we are now to consider whether it be possible to believe it, and yet receive no profit from it. But this certainly is altogether as impossible as the other, as I shall endeavour now to discover unto you, that you may all understand more perfectly where the fault lies, that you are not much better by every sermon you hear, and



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that every one of you is not as great and real a Saint as ever lived. I am sure there is none of you but do or may understand the Gospel, and all the contents of it, as well as ever any persons in the world either did or could: none of you but either have or may have the Word continually sounding in your ears. And did you but practise according to what you do or may hear, what holy, what glorious creatures would you all be! But the mischief is, you hear and hear the Word over and over again preached, explained, confirmed, and applied to you; but you do not really, you do not thoroughly believe and receive it as you ought to do. It is a customary thing amongst us to hear sermons, and to be present while a discourse is made concerning some point in divinity, or something revealed in the Gospel to us; and think it to be true in general, and therefore take it for granted that we truly believe it to be so. Whereas, alas! there is no such matter; as you may easily conclude from your not being every way such excellent and incomparable persons as the Gospel, which you so frequently hear, enjoins you to be. For as you cannot profit by what you hear, unless you believe it; so you cannot believe it, but you must needs profit by it; yea, so profit by it, as to live up to it.

1 Thess. 2.  
13.

For, first, all the promises of the Gospel are made to them that believe; yea, Heaven itself, with all its glory and happiness, is promised to them: for “God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life;” and, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;” but “without holiness no man shall see the Lord;” and therefore it must of necessity follow, that he that truly believes the Gospel, must be really and truly holy; for otherwise it is impossible for him to have the promise of eternal happiness fulfilled unto him. And besides that, where Heaven is promised, whatsoever is necessary to the enjoyment of it, must needs be included in the same promise. But the inclination of our souls to God, together with all true grace and virtue, is absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of Heaven; and therefore cannot but be promised together with it, unto all those that truly believe the Gospel. And therefore whosoever is not eminent for piety and good

John 3. 16.

Acts 16. 31.

Heb. 12. 14.

works, or howsoever doth not sincerely endeavour at least, unto the utmost of his power, to be so, he may conclude his faith to be defective, and that he doth not really believe in Christ as he should do; for, did he really believe, he could not but have all the promises of the Gospel fulfilled to him, and by consequence "be holy in all manner of conversation," [1 Pet. 1. 15.] as it is necessary all such should be that go to Heaven.

But not to insist any longer upon that, we need go no further to prove this, than to the nature of faith itself; which being, as I have shewn, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," even such an act or habit of the mind whereby the soul is so fully persuaded of the truth of all the promises of God, that the Christian looks upon them as certain as if they were already fulfilled; and as clearly sees what God foretells, as if he had it before his eyes; and so is as much assured of every thing that he meets with in the Gospel, as he is or can be of any thing in the world besides, be it never so plain and obvious unto him:—he that hath such a faith as this is, it cannot but have that influence upon him, as to sway and bend his mind to the performance of whatsoever duties the Gospel requires of him. For Faith cannot but have as much force and power upon the mind in spiritual, as it hath in natural things. Now suppose you were all thoroughly persuaded, that if you go out of this place within this hour, you would be no sooner out, but you would immediately drop down dead; would not such a persuasion as this is, prevail upon you all to stay here until the hour is fully expired? I dare say it would. Or if you did really believe, that if you went to such an house this night, you would most certainly be killed there, would any of you venture to go? I dare say you would not. Or suppose you were sure to lose all that you have in the world, unless you solemnly begged of God upon your knees to continue your estates to you: would not you all strive which should be upon their knees first? You cannot but believe you would. Would not the covetous man be liberal, if he really believed, that by giving of a penny, he should gain a pound? Would the drunkard himself drink that cup wherein he believes there is deadly poison? Would the profane swearer dare to take the name of the

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Eternal God in vain, did he really believe that the next time he did it he should be struck dumb, and never speak more? Would not the luxurious person abstain from his unclean dalliances, if he was sure he should die in the very next act that he committed? Or would not the most obstinate rebel throw down his sword immediately, if he was really assured that it would otherwise be sheathed in his own bowels? I dare appeal to all your consciences, whether you do not really believe that such persuasions as these are, would have the several effects which I have now mentioned. I am confident you all believe it. And if an human faith hath such power in natural, a divine faith surely cannot but have as much, if not much more, in spiritual affairs: which that I may clear up the better to you, I shall instance in several particulars.

1. First, therefore, you all know that our Saviour said,  
 Luke 13. 3. “But I say unto you, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Now were you all thoroughly persuaded of the truth of this proposition, so as really to believe that except you were so sensible of, so humbled for, so resolved against, and so converted from your sins, as for the future to observe all the commandments of God, as near as possibly you can, otherwise you must never know what true happiness, joy or comfort is, but must suffer the most exquisite torments that it is possible for a creature to undergo; I say, did you really believe this, would any of you dare to live in the wilful commission of any known sin, or else in the wilful neglect of any known duty? I cannot believe it. A thorough persuasion of this truth would not suffer you to do it.

2. Again; both the Law and the Gospel do frequently assure us, that the great God that made us is every where  
 Heb. 4. 13. present with us; that “all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.” Now, did you all believe this as you ought to do, even that the Supreme and All-glorious Being, that created and preserves the world, is continually with you wheresoever you are, and strictly observes you whatsoever ye do, taking special notice of every thought, word and action that comes from you, whether it be according to His laws or no;—did you really believe this, would it not have a strange awe upon your

spirits? Would it not make you fear and dread the thoughts of doing any thing which you know to be offensive to Him? Or, to bring it closer to you, did you firmly believe, that at this very moment the Eternal God, the Judge of all the world, is as really in this place as yourselves are, that He knows both every word that I have spoke, and every thought that hath come up in any of your hearts as really as I have spoke it, or you have thought it; yea, that He observes at this very moment what every one of you is now thinking of, as really as you heard me speak these words; I say, did you believe this, would not you startle and be affrighted at it? Would you not abhor yourselves, and repent in dust and ashes before Him? Would you dare to suffer your thoughts to be running up and down the world, while your bodies are in His presence and service? I dare say you durst not.

3. Furthermore, our Saviour saith, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and all these things," that is, all things necessary for life and godliness, "shall be added to you." These being the words of Christ, you may all think that you verily believe them; but I fear ye do not. For, did you verily believe, that according to this promise, if you devote yourselves wholly to the service of the living God, you need not trouble yourselves about any thing else, but God Himself would take care to provide for you, and give you whatsoever is truly good and needful for you: I say, did you verily believe this, would you be solicitous about the things of this life? Would your hearts be bent, or your souls inclined to any thing here below? Would not common prudence teach you to take the surest way for your subsistence, and not to suffer yourselves to be tormented with needless fears, and carking cares, about that which God Himself hath promised to provide for you. I know it would.

4. Moreover, our Saviour saith, "Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;" and "whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, he will give it you." Now did you all believe this, even that upon your solemn and sincere petitioning for it, there is no truly good thing but you may obtain it in the Name of Jesus Christ, would you need any



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- other arguments to excite and stir you up to prayer? Would not this be of itself a sufficient motive unto you? Do you think you could be able to forbear praying for a whole day together? Or if you did but believe it to be true what
- Matt. 18. 20. Christ saith, that where but “two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them;” did you verily believe this, I say, even that whensoever we meet here on any day of the week to pray to the great God, to hear His Word, and to praise His Name, that then our blessed Lord is in a peculiar manner present with us; what flocking should we then have to prayers? How happy should we think ourselves that we can enjoy them! And therefore, so long as I see that you do not prize nor regard the opportunities you have of making your public addresses to Almighty God, and of performing your homage and devotion to Him, but either never come at all, or else absent yourselves upon any slight occasion, let me tell you, you give us too much cause to suspect, that for all your profession of the Christian religion, you do not really believe Christ’s words, nor think that He meant as He said: for if you did, you would not look upon prayers as a burden, but as the greatest honour, privilege and happiness that you can enjoy.
- Eccles. 12. 14. 5. Again; did you believe that “God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be
- Acts 17. 31. good, or whether it be evil;” that “God hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him
- 2 Cor. 5. 10. from the dead;” so that “we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;” did you all believe that, according to these and the like Scriptures, you must all ere long be before Christ’s tribunal, as really as ye are now in this place, that then your lives shall be all reviewed, and all your thoughts, your words and actions looked over again, and examined by the word of God; and that Christ accordingly will say either, “Come, ye blessed,” or “depart, ye cursed,” to every soul here present, as really as ever you heard a word spoken in all your lives:—did you believe



this, I say, would it not make you very careful of what you think, or speak, or do? Would it be possible for you to be so foolhardy and presumptuous, as wilfully to break the laws, abuse the mercies, despise the judgments, and blaspheme the name of the Eternal God, if you really believed that for all these things God would bring you into judgment? No, you could not be so, it being impossible for a man that hath, and useth his reason, to do that which he knows and believes at the same time to be so evil, dangerous, and destructive to him. [Eccles. 11. 9.]

Lastly. Our blessed Saviour assures us, that the “wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.” Now, did you verily believe this; first, that if you continue in your sins, without forsaking of them, or having a pardon for them, you are then most certainly undone for ever; and that the momentary pleasure you have in sin shall be punished with everlasting torments, and your seeming delights in time with real misery to eternity: did you verily believe, that if you live and die in sin, you shall ere long be amongst the fiends of hell and damned souls, weeping and wailing and gnashing your teeth in the bottomless pit, as really as you are here at this time: would not such persuasions and believing thoughts as these are, damp all the pleasure you used to take in sin, and convert it into hatred and detestation against it; and into sorrow and repentance for it? If you were sure to live in want, in disgrace, in pain, and all manner of misery all your life long, unless you spent one hour this night in prayer to God, and reading of His Holy Word, would any of you neglect so easy a duty, if you were sure by that means to prevent so long and certain troubles? I dare say you would not. But how much more then, if you was assured in your consciences, and thoroughly persuaded in your minds, that eternal torments are most certainly designed for all impenitent sinners, and that unless you be truly holy in time, you shall be perfectly miserable to eternity: how much more, I say, would such a belief as this awake and stir you up to “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world!” How fearful would it make you of offending, how careful to please God! [Matt. 25. 46.] [Tit. 2. 12.]

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And then, on the other side: if you did really believe that there is such a place in the world as we call Heaven; a place of nothing but joy and comfort, of real pleasure and delight; a place as free from misery, and as full of happiness, as it is possible for us to desire; and that every soul here present, in and through Christ, may come to this place, and enjoy it for ever, so as never to feel any pain, or take any care more, but always to live as happily as he can wish to do:—did you, I say, really and firmly believe this, would not you all desire to come to so glorious, so blessed a place as this is? Nay, would not you so desire it as to make it your constant business in this world to get thither? Would you think any duty too great to undertake, or any misery too heavy to undergo, or any thing too dear to part withal for such a place as this? and if ye believed also that “without holiness no man shall ever see God,” nor come to this place of rest, could you give any sleep to your eyes, or slumber to your eyelids, until your sins are subdued, and your souls sanctified by the grace of God? I do not think ye could. For a full persuasion and assurance of such transcendant happiness as this, must needs deaden your affections to all things else, and quicken them so towards Heaven, that your minds would never be quiet, nor your souls at rest, but whilst you are looking after it, and walking in the narrow path that leads unto it.

[Heb. 12.  
14.]

I might instance in several other particulars of the like nature, yea, in any thing that the Gospel treats or speaks of. But these may be sufficient to fix this great truth upon your spirits, that it is nothing but infidelity and unbelief in them that hear it that makes the Gospel so unprofitable unto them: for did you really believe, that “except you repent, you must all perish,” you would not continue in your sins. Did you believe that whatsoever good things you asked, you might have them, you could not forbear asking: did you believe that God is always with you, and sees you, you would not dare to do any thing to offend Him: did you believe, that if you served God in the first place, He would provide all necessities for you, you would not trouble your heads about any thing but how to serve God: did you believe that God will examine all your actions in the world to

[Luke 13.  
3.]

come, you durst not but conform them to His laws in this : did you believe that the wicked shall be miserable and the righteous happy to eternity, you could not but endeavour to live as righteously as possibly you can in time. And, therefore, until you frame your lives according to the commands of the Gospel, whatsoever you may fancy to yourselves, you do not really believe it. I say it again, you do not really believe the Gospel, whatsoever profession you make of it, whatsoever pretences you make unto it, howsoever zealous you are in its behalf, you have no more real and true faith in it, than they that never heard of it. For true faith in the Gospel is quite another thing than the world is apt to imagine it; the Apostle tells us, "This is the victory that <sup>1</sup> John, 5. overcometh the world, even our faith;" and "who is he <sup>4, 5.</sup> that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God," as you read 1 John, v. 4, 5.

From whence you may observe, that faith in Christ and His Gospel, is such a victorious grace that it conquers and overcomes all this world. For by faith we may clearly see into the vanity of all things here below, and the glory and excellency of those things that are above; so as to trample upon and despise the highest overtures that this world can make us, looking upon them as nothing, as less than nothing, in comparison of what is purchased and prepared for us by Jesus Christ in the world to come. And so there is a strong power and efficacy in true faith, so great, as he which hath it cannot but act according to it. And therefore we may conclude, that where a man doth not live up to the Gospel, it is most certain he doth not believe it.

Thus, therefore, you see the reason why the Word preached doth so seldom profit, even because it is not mixed with faith in them that hear it. Men hear the Gospel preached, but they do not really, they do not firmly believe it: for if they did, there would be no complaining in our streets of injustice and oppression; in our state, of sedition and rebellion; nor in our Church, of schism and faction; but all amongst us, having the Gospel so clearly dispensed to them, would soon become real and true Christians, eminent in their religion, justice, and charity, and in all graces and virtues whatsoever. Which, therefore, that you may all be,

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let me advise you to begin here but to do that which ye all profess, even to believe the Gospel. And let me tell you, there is nothing in the world that you have or can have more, no, nor so much ground to believe, as you have to believe it: for you have the infallible Word and Testimony of Almighty God Himself for it; and that too confirmed with many real and undoubted miracles, wrought on purpose to strengthen your faith in it; which, if seriously weighed, cannot but convince any sober, unprejudiced, and considerative person of the truth and certainty of it. And yet it is strange to consider what a rare thing it is to find a man that truly believes it. But this also adds to the confirmation of it, it being no more than what was foretold by Christ Himself, saying, “When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” Whence it seems, He did not only question, but foresaw at that time, that at His second coming He should find but little or no faith upon earth. And verily I fear, that if He should come now, He would find but very little faith amongst us. I speak not this to censure or discourage any of you, but to excite you all to a greater diligence, in using all means to confirm your faith, without which it will be in vain for me to preach, or you to hear. And, therefore, as you desire not to mispend your time in coming to hear the Gospel preached, but to be profited by what you hear, be sure to come with faith; and to that end study all means imaginable to get your faith confirmed in the Gospel.

Luke 18. 8.

But then, you will say, How may we do that? Why, faith, you know, “is the gift of God,” and therefore you must go to Him for it. And, being sensible of the greatness of your unbelief, or at least of the weakness of your faith, beg of Him Whose gift it is, to bestow it upon you, praying with the Apostles, “Lord increase our faith,” and humbly confiding, that in and through Christ He will hear your prayers; wait upon Him for His answer in His holy ordinances; for, as the Apostle tells you, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” So that, although the Word cannot profit us without faith, yet faith is ordinarily produced and confirmed in us by it; not by bare coming to hear a sermon, but by considering and meditating

Eph. 2. 8.

Luke 17. 5.

Rom. 10. 17.

upon what you hear, and upon the grounds you have to believe it : which, by degrees, will strangely confirm you in the belief of it ; by which means you will soon learn the art of mixing what you hear with faith. And then you will find hearing the Word of God to be quite another thing from what it was heretofore : and it will make such impressions upon you, that you will soon excel and outstrip others both in your piety and devotions towards God, and likewise in your charity and justice to one another. And then you will live like Christians indeed ; and so believe in Christ now as to enjoy Him for ever.



## SERMON CXXXII.

SALVATION WHOLLY OWING TO FAITH IN CHRIST.

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ACTS, xvi. 31.

*And they said [unto him,] Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

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IF you and I did but seriously bethink ourselves at this time, what we are, and what we have been ; what filth we contracted by coming through the loins of our sinful parents, and what actual transgressions we have added to our original pollution ; did we but recollect ourselves, and consider how many, and what great offences we have committed against the eternal God, since we received our beings from Him, how should we blush and be ashamed in His presence ! How should we abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes before Him ! For we are all but as so many guilty malefactors, here assembled before the Judge of the whole world, guilty of transgressing His laws, and abusing His mercies, guilty of profaning His Sabbaths, and blaspheming His Name, guilty of the highest treason imaginable, even of actual rebellion against the universal Monarch, the supreme Lord and Governor of Heaven and earth ; insomuch, that should He now enter into judgment with us, should He deal with us after our sins, and reward us according to our iniquities, He might justly condemn and frown us all out of the place we are in, into everlasting misery and torment.

Neither is this the condition only of some few persons amongst us, for we have all sinned ; we were all born in sin, and have lived in sin ; high and low, rich and poor, old and

young, we have all broken the laws of Him that made us. We may differ in other particulars, as in our estates, our callings, our temper and constitution, and the like; but I am sure we all agree in this, we are all sinners: not a soul amongst us can say, I am clear from sin. And if any one should presume to say so, I may, without breach either of charity or civility, tell him to his face he is a liar. For so St. John himself, inspired by the Holy Ghost, saith, "If we 1 John 1. 8. say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not us." And if we have all sinned, as be sure we have, then we cannot all but be equally subject and obnoxious to the wrath of God, and all those dismal punishments, which are due to sin; we have all equally deserved, and may therefore justly expect "the wages of sin, even eternal death." Rom. 6. 23. Neither may we only expect it hereafter, but we have but too much cause to look for it every moment: none of us being ever certain but that he may draw his next breath in eternal flames, and so feel all the misery, pain, and torment, which infinite wisdom can invent for him, infinite justice adjudge to him, and infinite power inflict upon him.

This is the sad and doleful condition we are all in by reason of our sins; the consideration whereof, methinks, should strike that terror into you, as to make you dread the very thoughts of those sins which heretofore you have made your pleasure and delight. This I am confident of, that none of you can rightly weigh, and duly consider what you have done, but your hearts must of necessity be broken and contrite for your sins, so as to loathe and abhor yourselves, at each remembrance of them; yea, so as not to be able to endure yourselves, and scarcely to keep your spirits from sinking within you, under so great a weight, so insupportable a burden that lies upon you, so as to cry out in the bitterness of your souls, Oh, wretched men and women that we are, that ever we have been so ungrateful to Him that made us, so unthankful for His mercies, so unfruitful under His ordinances, so unmindful both of Him and ourselves, so sinful in all our ways, so foolish and unwise through our whole lives, as to incur the displeasure of so great a God, neglect the concerns of such precious souls, transgress such righteous laws, and deserve such dreadful judgments, such eternal tor-

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ments as we have done ! Oh, whither shall we go, what way shall we take, what shall we do that we may be eased of this intolerable load of sins that lies upon us, that our God may be reconciled unto us, that our iniquities may be all pardoned, and our souls may be freed from the misery which we have deserved, and advanced to that eternal happiness which they were at first designed for ?

I hope this is the language of most, or of all your souls, who, being sensible of your sins, cannot but be likewise humbled for them ; so humbled and broken for them, that you long to be rid of them, saying within yourselves, “What shall we do to be saved ?” To be saved from our sins, to be saved from our lusts, to be saved from everlasting ruin and destruction ? If, being possessed with a due sense of your sins, you seriously propound this question to me, as I hope you, at least in your hearts, do, I dare promise to give you a most certain and infallible solution of it, even in the words of my text, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” For this was the answer which St. Paul and Silas gave to the keeper of the prison, who being, as I hope you are, troubled and grieved for his sins, said to them, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? they said to him, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” Where we may first observe the manner and method of this man’s Salvation. He was by profession a gaoler ; by country, a Macedonian ; by his religion, if he had any, an Heathen : be sure he was very severe against the Christians, especially against Paul and Silas ; for they being committed to his charge and custody, “he thrust them into the inner prison : and made their feet fast in the stocks.” But about midnight, as they were praying and singing praises to Almighty God, the foundations of the prison were shaken, the doors opened, and the bonds of the prisoners loosed : at which the gaoler, being awakened out of his sleep, thinking the prisoners had been all fled, and himself obnoxious to death by the Roman laws, would have prevented the execution of it by another, by doing it himself ; and for that end drew his sword to kill himself : which St. Paul seeing, and retaining no grudge or malice against him for the rigour and severity wherewith he had used them,

calls to him to do himself no harm, assuring him they were all there; not a man gone, although the doors were open, and so the passage clear for them. Upon which the gaoler was so startled, that he presently calls for a candle, comes in trembling, and falls down before the feet of St. Paul and Silas, not to worship them, but to crave their pardon for what he had done against them. And here was the beginning of his conversion; his heart being now so contrite and broken for his sins, that he was not able to keep up his spirits, but sunk down before them. Now he was so sensible of, so humble for his sins, that he trembled at the remembrance of them. And therefore, laying aside the thoughts of all other things, the great and only scruple that now lay upon his conscience, the great and only question he had now to propound, was not how he might be rich, not how he might attain to honour and reputation in the world, not how he might do what he saw was done for them, even open his prison doors without keys, and loosen his prisoners' bonds without touching them, but how he "might be saved?" "Oh, sirs," said he, "what must I do to be saved?" He was troubled for his sins already, but that was not enough, he knew there was something else to be done, which as yet he knew not of: but he was certain the Apostles knew well enough, because God had wrought so great a miracle for them before his eyes: and therefore he propounded that question unto them, who presently resolved it, acquainting him with the only way to everlasting life.

From whence we may observe, by the way, how acceptable a sacrifice a broken heart is to Almighty God, and that a broken and a contrite spirit is never despised by Him. [Ps. 51. 17.] For this poor man was no sooner humbled for his sins, but he was presently directed how to have them pardoned: he was no sooner truly desirous of Salvation, but he was shewn the way to attain it: for so soon as ever he had seriously propounded this question to them, "What must I do to be saved?" St. Paul gave this full, satisfactory, and infallible answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

But, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," might the man say, who is He that I should believe in, and what is it you



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mean by believing in Him? To this a papist would give a ready answer, that it is to believe as the Church believes, right or wrong; and, if he did but so, he would not miss of Salvation. But St. Paul was not of this mind; he would not have him believe with such an implicit faith as the Church believed, nor yet as the Apostles themselves believed; as if his believing as they believed could save him, whether he knew what they believed or no: no, they would have him have an explicit, solid faith, grounded upon the word of God, as is plain from the following verse; “And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house:” that is, they explained unto him the several articles of the Christian faith, which he was to believe. Which clearly shews, that a distinct knowledge of the word of God was necessary to his believing aright in Christ, or else it would have been superfluous to have preached or explained it unto them, as it is expressly said they did, not only to the gaoler himself, but likewise to all his house. And therefore, these words, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house,” are not to be so understood, as if his believing would save all his house, or all that were in his family; as if he could believe both for himself and them too; but that “thou shalt be saved and thy house;” that is, if thou believest thou shalt be saved, and not only thyself, but thy whole house, thy wife, thy children, thy servants, may be all saved by faith in Christ, as well as thyself; who oughtest therefore to shew them a good example, by going before them in the way to everlasting life; and if thou goest before, they will be more easily persuaded to follow after.

And that this is the proper meaning and purport of the words is plain, in that when the Apostle had told him, if he would “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ he should be saved, and his house,” they presently expounded the word of God, not only to him, but to all that were in his house: for as it was not enough for him to believe as the Church believed, so neither was it enough that all that were in his house should believe as the master did: but they must all believe, every one for himself: and therefore the Apostles preached the word equally to them all, one as well as another.



Hence, therefore, it is easy to observe, that although the Apostle had told the gaoler, that if he “believed he should be saved,” yet he did not think this one expression enough to bring him to Heaven, unless he knew the full meaning of it, which he therefore makes known unto him; these words being only his text, which he took to open, confirm, and apply unto him. All which, questionless, he did so effectually, that we have just ground to believe, that the sermon, which the gaoler and his family then heard upon this text, was the means of their conversion; for it is expressly asserted, that he and his were presently baptised, and that he “believed in the Lord with all his house:” and, by consequence, that they were all saved according to the Apostle’s words; and so are now so many glorified Saints in the highest Heavens. [ver. 34.]

And, oh! that it might please the most High God, that these words may have the same effect upon you now, as they had then upon them; which doubtless they would, was St. Paul but in my stead to explain them unto you. But you can never expect to have St. Austin’s wish accomplished to you, even to see Christ on the Cross, or St. Paul in the pulpit. Howsoever, though St. Paul be not here, the word may be as effectual to you as if he was; for it was not his preaching it, but God’s Blessing upon it, that made it so powerful upon them that heard it. And it is all one with Almighty God to work by the weakest as well as by the strongest means in the world; by me as well as by St. Paul; who, though I cannot pretend to make so divine a discourse upon these words as St. Paul then did; howsoever I shall endeavour to preach the same matter, yea, the same divinity upon them as he did; for I shall speak nothing to them, but what I shall take out of St. Paul’s own writings, and out of other scriptures, dictated by the same Spirit where-with he was inspired, both when he spake, and when he explained these words. And therefore I hope that you will be as attentive to what you shall hear, as St. Paul’s hearers then were; and likewise that God, for Christ Jesus’ Sake, will so order it, that you may all be as they were, converted and saved, by hearing these words explained to you,

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In speaking to which words, therefore, as I shall not trouble you with any impertinent notions or critical observations upon them, so I must be sure likewise to hide nothing from you, but to give you the full meaning and purport of them. For which end there are two things necessary to be explained in them; whereof the first is, Who this Lord Jesus Christ is, Whom we ought to believe in; and the other, what it is to believe in Him: for he that knows these two things, knows all that the Apostle intended in these words, and by consequence whatsoever is necessary for his everlasting Salvation.

First, therefore we must consider Who this Lord Jesus Christ is. But this you may think to be a very unnecessary and superfluous question; as taking it for granted, that you all know Christ well enough already. But I fear you may be mistaken; for it is very rare to find any one that hath right notions and conceptions of Christ. I do not deny but you may all know there was such a Person once upon earth that was called Jesus Christ, that He did many miracles, that He was put to death, and rose again the third day, and then went up to Heaven, and the like. But all this you may know, and yet know nothing of Christ, as you ought to know it. The Corinthians had heard of Christ as well as you, yea, and were professors of His religion, as you all are; and yet for all that, the great and only thing which

1 Cor. 2. 2. St. Paul strove to make known unto them, was, "Christ and Him crucified." And, as St. Paul there said to them, so may I say to you, that although it be too much grown out of fashion with many to preach Christ and Him crucified, yet this is the great thing which I determine, and by the blessing of God shall endeavour to make known unto you; as knowing it is impossible for you to come to Heaven without believing in Christ, and as impossible to believe in Him unless you know Him.

Now, there are three things necessary to be known concerning Christ, His Person, His Offices, and His Merits; concerning His Person, you must know that He was God

and man, united together in one and the self-same Person.

1st. I say, He was God, really and truly God, of the self-same nature, substance, wisdom, power, and glory with the Father : not a creature, as the Socinians would make Him ; not only a made God, and constituted to be so by the Father, as the Arians asserted ; nor only 'Ομοουσιος, like to the Father in substance, as others have averred ; but God co-equal and co-essential, consubstantial, co-eternal, every way the same God with the Father. For we may observe all along in Scripture how the same names and properties, the same works and honour, which is given to the Father, is in the same manner given to the Son too ; as the Father is called Hos. 1. 7. Jehovah in Scripture, so is the Son, בִּיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם : as the Joh. 1. 1 ; Father is called God, so is the Son : as the Father is Alpha Joh. 20. 28 ; and Omega, the “ First and the Last,” so is the Son : as the Rom. 9. 5. Father is Eternal, so is the Son : as the Father is Almighty, Rev. 1. 8. so is the Son : as the Father is every where, so is the Son : Isa. 9. 6. as the Father knoweth all things, so doth the Son : as the Heb. 1. 3. Father made all things, so did the Son : as the Father Matt. 8. 20. preserves all things, so doth the Son : as the Father for- John 1. 48. gives sins, so doth the Son : as the Father is to be wor- Joh. 21. 17. shipped, so is the Son : as the Father is to be honoured, so is John 1. 3. the Son. No wonder therefore, that Christ, “ Being in the Heb. 1. 3. form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” Matt. 9. 2. He did not rob God of any glory by saying that Himself was Heb. 1. 6. in all things equal to Him. The greatest wonder of all is, John 5. 23. how any one can believe the Scriptures, or at least profess Phil. 2. 6. to do so, and yet deny this great truth, that Christ is really and truly God ; than which nothing is more frequently, more clearly, more evidently asserted in Holy Scripture. And if there was no other in all the Scriptures, my very text, compared with what follows, is a clear demonstration of it : for here St. Paul tells the gaoler, that if he “ believed on Jesus Christ, he should be saved ;” and then expounded to him Who this Jesus Christ was. And when he had heard St. Paul preaching upon this subject, it is said, that the gaoler “ believed in God, with all his house ;” which plainly shews, that St. Paul, assisted by the Holy Ghost, convinced the gaoler, that that Christ, Which he was to believe in, was God : for

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otherwise, why should he be said to believe in God, who was before advised to believe only in Christ, if believing in Christ, and believing in God, had not been one and the same thing ? From whence, therefore, it is not only certain that Christ is God, but that it is necessary also that we believe Him to be so : for the Apostle, doubtless, did not entertain the gaoler with any impertinent discourse, but only with what was necessary for his Salvation. But it is plain, that he then told and proved unto him, that Christ was God ; and therefore the belief of this, must needs be necessary for our Salvation : and the reason is, because unless we believe that Christ is God, we cannot rightly believe Him to be our Saviour ; none being able to free us from our sins, but only He against whom they were committed, nor to satisfy for the offences which we have committed against the Infinite God, but He Who is Himself infinite : and therefore none can doubt of Christ's Divinity, and yet expect pardon and Salvation from Him, all our hopes and expectations from Him depending only upon His assumption of our human nature into His Divine Person, which could not have been, was He not a Divine Person which did assume it.

2. As He was God, so was He man too : God of the same essence with the Father, and man of the same nature with us ; equal to the Father in every thing, His personal properties only excepted ; and like unto us in every thing, our sinful infirmities only excepted. For as He is expressly called God, so He is expressly called man too ; “ For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.” But I need not stand to prove this, none ever having denied it, but only some few heretics in the primitive times, who being thoroughly convinced that He was truly God, and not being able to imagine how He should be man too, they fancied Him to be man only *ἐν φαντασίᾳ*, not truly man, but only a kind of an apparition in the likeness of man, such a one as the Apostles themselves thought Him to be after His resurrection, till He had convinced them of the contrary. And if any of you should doubt how this should be, that He Who was God should become man too ; you may be satisfied with the answer which the Angel gave to the blessed Virgin.

1 Tim. 2. 5.

Luke 24.  
36, 37, 38.

Luke 1. 35.



3. As He was God and man, so He was both God and man in One and the same person : not one person as God, and another person as man, as the Nestorians of old thought, but one and the same person, both as God and man. And the reason was, because He did not assume the person of any man, but only the nature of man in general, which had no subsistence out of the Divine Person Who assumed it, and therefore could not constitute a person of itself, distinct from the person of the Son; but both the natures, the Divine and human, were so united together as still to constitute but one person : upon which hypostatical union of our nature to the Divine person, the meritoriousness and efficacy of Christ's death depends, because it was the death of Him Who was truly God. Acts 20. 28.

Thus therefore it is, that we should think of Christ as of one who was really and truly God, really and truly man, and yet really and truly but one Christ, or one Person, not properly compounded of two natures, but one in whom the Divine and human nature were united; not so as to be blended or confounded together, not so united as to make but one nature after their union, as the Eutychians affirmed, but so as still to remain two distinct natures, though in one and the same person. Even as in the glorious Trinity there be three distinct Persons, and yet but one nature; so in Christ there be two distinct natures, and yet but one Person.

Now, if you do but keep this the true notion of Christ's Person in your minds, you will easily apprehend the natures, extent, and end of those Offices which he was pleased to undertake and perform for mankind ; which now come in the next place to be considered. For which we must know, that his Office in general was to be the Mediator betwixt God and Man, to reconcile God to us, and us to God, and so to be a second Adam, raised up to repair the losses which we sustain in the first. For which end it was necessary He should be both God and man, that He might mediate between both parties, and bring them together again, by making up the breach which was betwixt them. For, having first united both their natures in one person, He was thereby fully and completely qualified to unite



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them together in love and affection too. For the accomplishment whereof, He divided His office of Mediatorship in general into three particular branches, and undertook to be our Priest, our Prophet, and our King, which are all imported in the names ordinarily given Him in Holy Scripture, being called Jesus Christ our Lord. For His name Jesus denotes His Priestly office, whereby He saved us from our sins by offering up Himself as a sacrifice for them: His name Christ, that is, anointed, imports His being anointed and sent to be our Prophet, to reveal the will and pleasure of His Father to us: and then He is called our Lord, that is, King and Governor, to exercise dominion over us, and so to lead us to everlasting life. But seeing all our expectations from Him are grounded upon His execution of these three offices for us, it will be necessary to explain them more particularly to you.

First, therefore, He was our Priest, yea, our High Priest, Heb. 5. 5, 6. constituted and appointed by God Himself, so that He was a Priest not after the Levitical Order, which was only a type of His, but after the Order of Melchisedech, which exceeded the Levitical in several particulars, especially in the continuance of it. For though we read of Melchisedech's being the Priest of the Most High God, we do not read of his father or mother, of his beginning nor ending; Gen. 14. 18. we read of none that preceded him in his Priesthood, nor yet of any till Christ that succeeded him, so as the Priests in the Levitical law succeeded one another, the Priesthood being entailed there upon Aaron's posterity, and so descending down from father to son, from one generation to another: whereas "Melchisedech was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a Priest continually:" for so Christ exactly was; without father, as to His manhood; without mother, as to His Godhead; without descent, having no predecessors in His priesthood, nor successors neither, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but He always was, and always will be a Priest for ever. And there are two parts of His Priestly office which Christ performed for us:

1. He executed His Priestly office, by making atone-

ment, propitiation, and satisfaction for our sins, in His Own body, by offering up Himself as a Lamb without spot as a sacrifice to expiate our sins, and so take off our obligations to punishment; which is so plainly asserted in Holy Scripture, that I cannot but wonder with myself how ever any one could have the confidence to deny it. For it is expressly said, “that Christ hath loved us, and given Himself Eph. 5. 2. for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.” “He gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” And Himself tells us, “He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a 1 Tim. 2. 6. ransom for many,” *λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν*, the price of redemption, instead of many. Hence the Apostle tells us, “that Rom. 3. 24, we are justified freely by His grace through the redemption 25. that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past.” “For Rom. 5. 6. 8. when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. And God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” “He was wounded for our transgressions, and the Lord Isa. 53. 5, 6. laid on Him the iniquities of us all.” “His soul was made ver. 10. an offering for sin.” Hence the Apostle proves His Priestly Heb. 9. 26. office, from His offering up Himself as a sacrifice for sin. 28. By all which, and many other suchlike places in Holy Scripture as might easily be produced, it plainly appears, that Christ did not die only to confirm His doctrine, and shew us an example of patience, humility, and self-denial, as the Socinians, Photinians, Samosatensians, and other heretics have asserted, but that He died really as a sacrifice for our sins, and in our stead, so as to satisfy the justice of God, and pay that debt which otherwise would have been required of us. ch. 10. 12.

And indeed this is the ground and foundation of all our hopes and expectations from Christ: take away this, and our whole religion will fall to the ground; for God hath threatened death against all sinners; and unless Christ hath suffered that death for us, we still are, and always shall be subject to it, and so, do what we can, we must of necessity perish unto all eternity. But, blessed be the

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Name of the Most High God for it, as there is no truth more necessary to be known, so neither is there any truth more clearly revealed in Holy Scripture than this is, that Christ died to make atonement and propitiation for our sins; so that none can possibly deny it without the most palpable contradiction to the whole tenour of the Gospel.

And verily, if you do but consider Who Christ was, even One Who was both God and man in one person, you may easily apprehend Him in every way qualified to satisfy God's justice for man's sins, which no person ever was or could be capable of doing but Himself. For every sin being committed against an infinite God, doth thereby deserve infinite punishment; which infinite punishment all the creatures in the world could never undergo, because they are but finite. And therefore to pay the debts which were owing, or suffer the punishments which were due from man to God, it was absolutely necessary that He who undertook it should be Emanuel, God with us, or God and man. For if He was not man, He would not be capable of being bound for us; if He was not God, He would not be able to pay our debt. It was man that had offended, and therefore man must have suitable punishment laid upon him: but it was God, that was offended, and therefore God must have sufficient satisfaction made unto Him; which could never be made but by one who was both God and man. For if He was not man, He could not suffer at all; if He was not God too, He could not suffer enough to make it satisfactory. In brief, take this great mystery in these few and perspicuous terms: man can suffer, but he cannot satisfy: God can satisfy, but He cannot suffer; and therefore to make one capable of suffering, so as to satisfy God by what he suffers, he must of necessity be both God and man, and that in one person too, as Christ was. For if the man who suffered was a distinct person from God, then his sufferings could be no more than the sufferings of a man, a finite creature, and so not able to satisfy for the sins committed against the infinite Creator; but Christ being both God and man in one person, by virtue of this personal or hypostatical union of the human nature to the Divine in one person; hence all the sufferings which He underwent, were the sufferings of an infinite person, and



so very satisfactory to infinite justice; because though the nature wherein He suffered was but finite, yet the Person that suffered in that nature was infinite. By which means it comes to pass, that the sufferings of Christ were more satisfactory to the justice of God, than if all the creatures in the world had suffered death to eternity; because all these together were but finite, whereas He alone is infinite, and so suffered as much as infinite justice itself could possibly require of us.

Thus, therefore, it was, that Christ, as our Priest, made satisfaction to God's justice for our sins when He was upon earth, and therefore is now making intercession to His mercy for our souls in Heaven, which is the other part of His Priestly office, which the Apostle lays the main stress of our Salvation upon; because the application of the merits of His death and passion to us, depends upon this His intercession for us. For, as it was typically represented in the old law, the High Priest once a-year having killed the sacrifice, he took some of the blood, and with that entered into the Holy of Holies, and there made atonement for the people; so Christ having offered up Himself as a sacrifice for our sins, He with His Own blood went into the Holy of all Holies, into Heaven itself, and there appears for us before the Most High God, Heb. 7. 25. as our Saviour, Mediator, and Advocate. 1 John 2. 1.

2. The second Office which Christ performeth for us, is the Prophetical; for He was a Prophet as well as a Priest: as He was a Priest to expiate our sins, so was He a Prophet to acquaint us with our duty. By virtue of this office it was that He hath made known the will and pleasure of His Father to mankind in all ages since the world began: in the Old Testament by the Patriarchs and Prophets, by visions and dreams, and the like; and sometimes by immediate revelations. After that He came down in His Own person, and acquainted mankind with whatsoever they were bound to believe or do, in order to their Salvation by Him; and when He was to leave this world, and return to His Father again, he gave commission to his Apostles to do the same, and promised them, that "He would be with them to the end of the world:" which shews that the commission He then granted to the Apostles, was to be continued to all suc- Deut. 18. 15. Acts 3. 22. Matt. 28. 19.



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ceeding Ministers, as it is to this day; for by virtue of the command and promise which He then made, you hear so much of Christ at this time, and of the things that belong to your everlasting Salvation, and so questionless mankind will do to the end of the world, maugre all the opposition that men or devils can make against it. Neither doth He only teach men outwardly by the Ministers of His Word, but inwardly also by the operation of His Spirit, as I hope many of you have found by experience already, and will still find more and more.

3. The last Office which Christ undertook, and still performeth for us, is the Kingly office; for He is called "a King," and elsewhere "the King of Kings;" yea, "all power is given unto Him in Heaven and earth," which is to be understood only of the human nature, as He was man; for as God nothing could be given to Him or taken from Him. But His very human nature, by virtue of its assumption into the Divine person, is now exalted over all the creatures of the world, so that He always did, and still doth exercise power, dominion, and authority, over all the creatures in the world, and the Angels themselves both good and bad; and the souls of men are subject to Him as well as their bodies. By virtue of this office it is that He prescribeth laws to mankind, and distributeth His punishments and rewards according as they neglect or obey what He hath prescribed, condemning those that disobey Him to everlasting torments, and conferring eternal happiness upon all that obey His Gospel.

Phil. 2. 10,  
11.

These, therefore, are the three Offices which Jesus Christ hath undertaken and executed for mankind, and none but He. Melchisedech was a King and a Priest, Samuel a Priest and Prophet, David a King and Prophet, but none but Christ ever was or ever will be both King, Priest, and Prophet too; nor yet such a King, such a Priest, nor such a Prophet as He is, so as to accomplish whatsoever was necessary to be done in order to our Salvation, as He hath done; who is therefore truly said to be both the "Author and Finisher of our faith," and so of our Salvation too.

Heb. 12. 2.

Which that we may the better understand, we must in the last place consider the merits of Jesus Christ, or the

benefits which may or do accrue unto us by reason of what He hath done and suffered for us.\* For seeing the Son of God Himself was pleased to do, and suffer so much as He hath done upon our account, we must needs conclude, that it was not for a little or no purpose, but that there is more in it than we are aware of. That the Son of God should become the Son of Man, that our human nature should be assumed into His Divine person, that He that made the world should be made into it; that He that was in the form of God, should take upon Him the likeness of a servant; that eternity should stoop to time, and Heaven come down to dwell upon earth; that the Glorious Sun of Righteousness itself should be spit upon by worms; that Justice itself should be condemned, Omnipotence derided, Happiness be in misery, and Life itself be put to death; even that Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God, God coequal with the Father, that He should not only become man, but should also suffer such conflicts and agonies, such contempt and derision, such grief and pain, such an ignominious, accursed, and cruel death as He hath suffered from His Own creatures; who is able to think of it without wonder and amazement? Certainly this could never have been but upon some extraordinary account indeed. And the benefits which He hath merited for us in such an astonishing way as this was, cannot but be like Himself, infinite and unspeakable. And therefore expect not that I should describe them perfectly unto you; that is more than men or Angels can ever do. Howsoever, I shall endeavour to give you some dark intimations of them as well as I can, that you may understand so much at least of the meritoriousness and efficacy of Christ's death, and of the glorious privileges that He hath purchased for you with His Own blood, that you may be persuaded without any more ado to close with Him, and to observe what He hath enjoined, in order to your partaking of His merits and mediation.

First, therefore, Christ by His death hath merited and procured pardon and remission of sins for all such as repent and believe His Gospel; which is such a benefit to mankind, that the very remembrance of it should make our hearts even leap within us: for, by reason of our sins com-

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mitted against the Eternal God, we are all condemned to eternal death, and are every moment obnoxious to it. Neither is it possible for us to avoid it by any thing which ourselves can either do or suffer; no grief or sorrow, no contrition or repentance, no virtue or obedience, no pious, no charitable, no good works whatsoever being able to expiate the least of the many and great sins which we are guilty of, so that we can have no expectations at all of pardon from what ourselves do, how specious and plausible soever it may appear. But our comfort is, that what we could never have done ourselves, Christ hath done most effectually for us. For by offering up Himself as a sacrifice for our sins, he hath thereby made such satisfaction to Almighty God for them, that none of us but in and through Him may obtain perfect remission and forgiveness of whatsoever we have hitherto done against God: “for in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.” And elsewhere, “In Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” And many suchlike places are there in holy Scripture, wherein we have as much assurance as God Himself can give us, that if we sincerely repent and believe in Christ, all the sins that ever we committed against God shall be remitted by God to us, so as never to rise up in judgment against us. Now, what an unspeakable mercy and privilege is this, that whatsoever sins you know yourselves to be guilty of against the Supreme Governor, the Universal Monarch of the whole World, may be all pardoned and forgiven to you.

Eph. 1. 7.

Col. 1. 14.

And though this be exceeding much, yet it is not all neither. For, in the next place, besides the remission of your former sins in and through Christ, you may be all made truly and sincerely holy, real Saints, not such as the Pope canoniseth, but such as God Himself will canonise, so as to accept of you, and enrol your names in the catalogue of Saints in Heaven. For Christ, by His death, did not only merit pardon, but grace for you; so that you may not only be justified by His merit imputed to you, but sanctified also by His Spirit implanted in you; so as to have both perfect forgiveness of your former sins, and sufficient power against

sin for the future. For this was one of the principal ends of His coming into the world, even “to bless you, in turn- Acts 3. 26.  
ing away every one of you from his iniquities.” And He was therefore called Jesus, because He was “to save His Matt. 1. 21.  
people from their sins;” not only from their guilt, but likewise from the filth and power of sin. And therefore He is said to be made our sanctification, as well as righteousness; 1 Cor. 1. 30.  
because by Him we may be made sincerely holy in ourselves, as well as accepted of as such in Him. And although we cannot expect to be perfect in this life, but there will be still some relic of sin within us, whereby our best duties and works will be polluted, yet howsoever God, for Christ’s sake, will accept of our evangelical sincerity instead of legal perfection. Now, what an unspeakable comfort is this to all of you, that how strong and prevalent soever your sins have been or still are, you may have them all subdued under you, and all true grace and virtue infused into you, by virtue of that blood which Christ shed for you, whereby your dark minds may be so enlightened, your erring judgments so informed, your sleepy consciences so awakened, your perverse wills so rectified, your disorderly affections so ordered, your strong sins so weakened, your weak graces so strengthened, your sinful souls so wholly sanctified, as to be fit companions for glorified Saints and Angels in the world to come.

And that brings me to the last thing which Christ hath merited for us, even everlasting happiness and Salvation in the life to come, which is but the necessary consequent of the two former benefits that He hath purchased for us; for if our sins, which only can keep us out of Heaven, be pardoned, and our corruptions, which make us incapable of enjoying Heaven, be cleansed away, so that we are made really and truly holy in all manner of conversation; here it follows in course, that we shall be really and truly happy in all manner of perfection hereafter; eternal happiness being certainly entailed upon evangelical holiness and piety in this life. And, therefore, if you would know in short what Christ hath done for you; in plain terms He hath made way for you all to go to Heaven: insomuch that there is never a soul amongst you, how sinful soever heretofore you have



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been, how poor and needy, how simple and ignorant, how vile and despicable soever you still are, but who may by Christ be advanced above yonder glorious sun, and the stars themselves. So that you may all as really be admitted hereafter into the Church above, as you are now in this below ; and as certainly see Christ shining in all His glory, with all the Saints and Angels attending of Him, as you now see me, or one another. In a word ; by Christ you may all as certainly be glorified Saints in Heaven, as you are now sinful creatures upon earth.

But then you will say, It is true, we all believe that Christ hath merited Salvation for mankind : but the great question is, what we must do that we in particular may be saved by him ? To which I answer with the Apostle in my text, “ Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.”

## SERMON CXXXIII.

SALVATION WHOLLY OWING TO FAITH IN CHRIST.

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ACTS xvi. 31.

*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*

HAVING thus considered the object of saving faith, even our Lord Jesus Christ, we are now to consider the act of faith itself, or what it is to believe : that knowing now Who is that Christ Whom we ought to believe in, we may know likewise what it is to believe in Him, so as that we may be saved ; or what it was St. Paul meant when he said, “ Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” For faith in Christ being not only the most certain, but the only way to get to Heaven, we can never expect to come thither, unless we believe ; but we can never believe in Christ aright, unless we first know what it is to do so. And it is not so easy to know this, as it is commonly thought to be : men ordinarily taking their profession of the Christian faith to be all the faith in Christ which is required of them. As if the very naming of His Name were sufficient to entitle them to all His merits without any more ado. But hark what our Saviour Himself saith to such persons as these : “ Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of My Father Which is in Heaven.” And if a man may speak thus reverently of Christ, and pray thus fervently to Him, and yet not get to Heaven ; a man may then most certainly

Matt. 7. 21.

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do all this, and yet not believe: for all that truly believe are sure to go to Heaven, as the Apostle here certifies the gaoler, saying, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

But all you who are here present, I am confident, desire to be saved; and I am as confident that you can never attain your desires without Christ, nor by Him, without believing in Him; and, therefore, you are all equally concerned to understand what this believing in Christ is, upon which your eternal happiness and Salvation doth so much depend. And do not say within yourselves, nor fancy that you believe already; for I assure you many have been as confident that they have believed, as any of you either are or can be, and yet have been most fearfully mistaken: for Christ Himself hath told you, that many shall presume so much upon their faith in Him, as to say to His face, "Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in Thy Name, and in Thy Name cast out Devils, and in Thy Name done many wonderful works?" Oh, how confident would you be of your believing in the Name of Christ, if you could do such things as these are, in it! And yet you know what answer they shall receive from Christ, even nothing else but an angry protestation, that He doth not know them; and therefore will say unto them, "Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." What a sad and fearful thing will it be, should any of you who hear me at this time, be in these men's case, that after all your professions of the Gospel, and pretences to faith in Christ, Christ Himself should say unto you, "Depart from Me, for I know you not!" And yet there is no way in the world for you to escape this dreadful sentence, but by believing aright in Him; which, notwithstanding, you can never do, unless you understand first how to do it.

Matt. 7. 22.

ver. 23.

That, therefore, you may not plead ignorance at the Day of Judgment, nor yet accuse me for being unfaithful to you in not acquainting you with the true nature of this work, which is so indispensably necessary for you all to perform, or else be undone for ever, I shall endeavour to explain it clearly and fully to you. For, as I would not be deceived myself, so neither would I have you deceived in a matter of

such consequence as this. And therefore have searched very narrowly into the true nature and notion of it, that so I might both satisfy myself, and certify you, what that is which the Apostle here, and the Gospel all along, calls "believing in Jesus Christ;" or what that faith really is, whereby alone our persons can be justified, and our souls saved. Which being my only design, I shall not trouble you with impertinent discourses concerning any other kinds of faith, as they are usually termed; as an historical faith, a temporary faith, a faith of miracles, or the like. For whether these be distinct species of faith or no, be sure it is acknowledged by all, that such a faith as riseth no higher than what is meant by those expressions, can never bring a soul to Heaven. And therefore I shall not discourage your attention with treating of them, but shall speak only of that faith, of such a believing in Jesus Christ, whereby the Apostle here tells us we may be saved; which is therefore commonly called a justifying or saving faith.

Now, making diligent inquiry into the true nature of this faith, I find two very dangerous opinions concerning it: the one is of the Socinians, the other of the Papists; which I should not mention (because I love not to trouble either you or myself with controversies), but that they are both of very pernicious consequence, and as much contrary to the true nature of faith, as they are to one another. And if any of you should be prepossessed with either of these two extreme opinions, it will be very hard and difficult to reconcile you to the true one.

First, therefore, the Socinians, together with the Samosatensians hold, that justifying or saving faith is nothing else but obedience sincerely performed to the law of God; so that good works are not the fruit of faith, but constitute the very form and essence of it. But this directly contradicts the very notion of faith in general, which the Apostle describes to be the "substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" which cannot possibly be said of obedience without manifest absurdity. And, besides that, the Scripture all along distinguisheth betwixt faith and obedience as two distinct things, as where our Saviour saith, "Repent and believe the Gospel;" where repentance doth [Heb. 11. 1.] Mark 1. 15.



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plainly comprise under it, not only our aversion from sin, but likewise our conversion unto God, and by consequence sincere and universal obedience to all His laws and commands; and yet it is plain, that our Saviour here enjoins us to believe His Gospel, as a distinct duty from our repentance, or obedience to the law. And the Apostle reckons up “faith, hope, and charity,” as three distinct graces. But elsewhere the same Apostle tells us, that “love, or charity, is the fulfilling of the whole law:” and therefore nothing can be more plain, than that faith was really a distinct thing from obedience in the Apostle’s account. Indeed, they differ as much as the cause and effect do: for faith is the instrumental cause whereby we are enabled to perform obedience, for it is by it that our hearts are purified; yea, and they have different objects too; for obedience respects only the commands, but faith looks only to the promises of God made to us in Jesus Christ. Hence, although faith be always accompanied with obedience and good works, so as that it can never be without them, yet in the matter of our justification, it is always opposed against them by St. Paul. And indeed to look to be justified by such a faith which is the same with obedience, or which is all one, to be justified by our obedience to the law of God, is to take off all our hopes and expectations from Christ, and to place them upon ourselves, and our own performances. So that we may thank ourselves, and not Christ, or at least we may thank ourselves, as well as Christ, if our sins be ever pardoned, or our persons justified before God. And therefore, this notion of faith overthrows the very basis and foundation of the Christian religion, making our Salvation to depend altogether upon our obedience, without any respect at all to Christ.

Rom. 1. 5;  
ch. 16. 26.

But there are two or three places of Scripture, which they would persuade the world, do very much favour their opinion; such especially where mention is made of the “obedience of faith.” But such places are so far from proving that opinion, that they quite overthrow it: for if it be the obedience of faith, it cannot be faith itself; though, to speak truly, faith here is not that *fides quæ creditur*, that faith whereby we believe; but the *fides quæ creditur*,

the doctrine of faith which is believed. So that the obedience of faith is that obedience which the doctrine of faith, or the Gospel, requires; which is therefore called elsewhere “the obedience of Christ,” and the “obedience of the truth;” not subjectively, as if Christ or the truth were the subjects of our obedience, but objectively, because our obedience is performed to Christ, and His truth, and so to the faith which He requires of us. And in that sense, I confess, there is obedience in every act of faith, because he that believes obeys the command of Christ, enjoining him to believe. But this is only one act of obedience to one particular command; and therefore cannot with any show of reason be called obedience in general; which comprises under it an universal conformity of all our lives and actions to all the laws and commands of God. Neither indeed is it the *τὸ credere*, that obedience which we perform to Christ, by believing in Him: it is not this, I say, whereby we can be justified or saved: for then our justification and Salvation would be wholly ascribed to something within ourselves, and not to Christ; or, in plain terms, we should be justified by our own merits, and not by His: which plainly contradicts the whole tenour of the Gospel, and the grand design of Christ’s coming into the world, and of all that He hath done or suffered for us. And therefore, all things considered, although, as I shall prove anon, true faith can never be separated from good works, or, as they call it, from obedience; yet it is plainly another, and a distinct thing from it, and cannot be confounded with it, without manifest prejudice to Christ, and contradiction to His Gospel.

<sup>2</sup> Cor. 10. 5.  
<sup>1</sup> Pet. 1. 22.

The other false and erroneous opinion concerning faith is that of the Papists, who confidently assert, that it is sufficient for Salvation, if a man hath but such an implicit faith, whereby he becomes a son of the Catholic Church; and believes as she believes, whether he knows what she believes or no: which is such a monster of faith, for a man to believe he knows not what, that it may justly be termed atheism or irreligion, rather than faith: for all faith supposes an assent to something which is known to be testified by another: but an implicit faith, as they call it, supposes

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nothing particularly known to be so testified; and so there is nothing of faith in it, because it hath no particular object which it assents to: for he that believes only as the Church believes, without knowing what that is, such a one believes nothing that he knows of; and so hath indeed no faith at all of his own, whereby he can be saved; and therefore, if he ever be saved, it must be by the faith of another, yea, of many others, even of the Catholic Church, though he doth not know what that is neither, only he believes it to be the Church of Rome. And therefore such a one may be said indeed to believe in the Pope, or in the Church, but he can never be said to believe in Christ, as the Apostle here enjoins the gaoler to do: he doth not bid him believe as the Church believes, nor believe as the Apostles believe, but “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

But to this the Papists object, that if an implicit faith be not sufficient to Salvation, then it is necessary for a man to know, and clearly to understand, all the mysteries in the Gospel, before he can believe them; but that is impossible for any man to do. But this, the main prop, yea, chief foundation whereupon they build their implicit faith, will be easily removed, if you do but consider, that the knowledge requisite to a true faith is not such a comprehensive knowledge whereby a man clearly understands the things he believes, as they are in themselves; for that would not be properly faith, but science or vision, which can never be expected until we come to Heaven; but such a knowledge whereby we know such mysteries to be revealed by God, and so they are the proper objects of a Divine faith, because testified by Divine authority. So that it is not the reason of the thing, but the testimony of God, that induceth us to believe. And did the Papists mean no more than this, that it is not necessary for a man to know the reason of the thing in order to his believing of it, we should easily grant it: for no man can possibly understand the reason of all the Gospel mysteries. And therefore, the Socinians err as much on the one hand, as the Papists do on the other: for, as the Papists hold, that no knowledge at all is necessary to a saving faith, not so much as to know such things to be

revealed and testified by God; so the Socinians, on the other hand, they plead for such a knowledge as is fetched from the inward reason of the thing; such as we have by reason and demonstration in philosophical matters. And this is the reason they deny the Sacred Trinity, the Divinity and incarnation of Christ, together with the meritoriousness and efficacy of His death and passion; because they would make reason the only judge of these great mysteries. And because they cannot comprehend them, therefore they will not believe them; and by consequence act not like Christians, but philosophers, searching out the internal principles and reasons of things: whereas the Christian faith requires us to believe what God saith, only because He saith it, without ever troubling our heads with the reasons of it; which be sure we shall never perfectly understand whilst we are here below. But though it be not necessary for us to know the reason of what God saith, yet it is necessary for us to know that He saith it; otherwise how is it possible for us to believe it because He saith it, if we do not know whether ever He said it or no?

This, therefore, is that knowledge which is necessary to true faith, even that we know such and such things to be attested by God, without which our faith will be but a mere implicit faith, and so no true faith at all.

For, that such a knowledge as this is absolutely necessary to true faith, you will all grant, if you do but consider, first, the Apostle's words, "How shall they believe in Him of Rom. 10. 14. Whom they have not heard?" From which words nothing can be more plain, than that, in order to our believing in Christ, it is indispensably necessary that we first hear of Him; and so know what is asserted by God, and so what is to be believed by us concerning Him. Hence the same Apostle tells us, that "faith cometh by hearing;" because Rom. 10. 17. hearing the word of God is the ordinary means whereby we come to the knowledge of those things which we ought to believe: whereas if an implicit faith could bring a soul to Heaven, if a man could be saved, although he be altogether ignorant of Him by Whom alone he can be saved: if so, to what end were the Scriptures written? Wherefore are they preached? For what need you read



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or hear the word of God, if you could be be saved without it, or without knowing what is in it? But whatsoever they, who profess themselves of the Catholic Church, pretend, I am sure Christ Himself commands us all to “search the Scriptures;” and that upon this very account too, that we might know what is there testified of Him. But why should He command that, if it was not necessary for us to know what is testified of Him, in order to our right believing in Him?

John 5. 39.

Matt. 22. 29.

Moreover, our Saviour Himself elsewhere tells the Sadducees, that “they erred, not knowing the Scriptures;” and, therefore, ignorance of the Scriptures is so far from being the mother of faith and devotion, as the Papists hold, that it is indeed the mother of error and delusion. So that it is impossible to be grossly ignorant, and yet truly devout at the same time; impossible to believe as we ought, unless we first know what we ought to believe.

John 4. 22.

And, therefore, as our Saviour justly blamed the Samaritans, because they worshipped they knew not what, so may they be justly blamed too, who believe they know not what; who profess indeed to believe as the Church believes, without knowing what it is which the Church believes, and so without knowing what themselves believe.

But to prove this, that in order to our believing in Christ aright, it is needful for us to know what is asserted of Him in the Holy Scriptures, I needed not to have gone so far; for my text itself, compared with what follows, is a sufficient demonstration of it. For when the Apostle had enjoined the gaoler to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it presently follows, in the next verse; “And they spake unto him the Word of God, and to all that were in his house.” He first told him that he must believe in Christ, and then he acquainted him Who that Christ was, Whom he ought to believe in. And it is probable, that when the Apostle had told him that he must believe in Christ, he presently asked the question Who that Christ was? To which the Apostle doth not answer as a Jesuit would, that it was no matter Who it was: it was not necessary for him to know that; no, the Apostle told him Who He was, and explained the Word of God to him, that so he might know what he was

to believe, that he might be saved. This was the method which the Apostle took to direct the gaoler to eternal happiness; not only telling him in general that he must believe, but acquainting him in particular with what he ought to believe concerning Christ, and with what was testified of Him in the Word of God.

From what we have hitherto discoursed, it is easy to observe, not only the falsehood of the forementioned opinions concerning faith, but likewise what is the first thing necessarily required to it, even knowledge: which is so great a part of faith, that it is often put for the whole. “By His knowledge,” saith God, “My righteous Servant shall justify many;” that is, many shall be justified by knowing of Him; which could not be, unless knowing of Him was the same thing with believing in Him, to which our justification is always ascribed in the New Testament. And the reason why the knowing Christ is so often put for believing in Him, is, because as none can believe in Him that doth not first know Him, so neither can any one be said truly to know Him that doth not believe in Him: or, howsoever, knowledge being so frequently put for faith, we may thence most certainly conclude, that true faith in Christ cannot possibly consist with gross ignorance of him; and by consequence, that the first thing which you are to endeavour after in order to your believing in Christ, so that you may be saved by Him, is a clear and distinct knowledge of what is revealed and recorded concerning Him in the Holy Scriptures; which were written for this very purpose and end, John 17. 3. Isa. 53. 11. that you might know what to believe. John 20. 31. And whatsoever you read there concerning Christ would have been written in vain, and to no purpose, was it not necessary for you to know it, in order to your believing in it. But what is usually said of nature, may be much better applied to God, even that He doth nothing in vain: and therefore, we may justly conclude, that He had a special and gracious end, in causing the life and miracles, the sayings and sufferings of Christ, together with His Nature, Offices, and Merits, to be revealed and recorded in writing for all generations to read; and that was only that all might thereby know what to believe

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concerning Him : and until you do this, it is in vain to speak of believing.

And therefore, as ever you desire to believe in Christ aright, so as to have your sins pardoned, your persons justified, and your souls eternally saved by Him, your first work must be to learn Who He was, what He did, how, and why He suffered, and what is said of Him in the Word of God ; and what God hath for His sake promised to all those that sincerely obey and serve Him. For this knowledge of Him is the first step to faith in Him ; and so the first thing to be endeavoured after all by such among you, as really desire to obtain eternal happiness and Salvation in and through Christ's merits and Mediation.

Supposing, therefore, that you all have advanced so far towards faith, that you all know what is said of Christ in Holy Scripture, according as I have endeavoured to explain it to you ; the next thing to be done in order to your believing, is to give firm and full assent to what you know : and as your knowledge is, so ought your assent to be. As it is not necessary for you to know the reason of what is said in the Scriptures, it is sufficient that you know it to be there said : so also for your assent : it must not be moved by any philosophical arguments or demonstrations, drawn from the reason of the thing ; for then it would not be faith, but knowledge, or science, strictly so called : but our assent must be grounded only upon the testimony of God, even as an human faith is that whereby we assent to any thing which a man speaketh to, merely upon his word ; as believing him both to know the truth of what he saith, and to be faithful in delivering it unto us : so that it is properly a Divine Faith, when we assent to any assertion or proposition, because attested or asserted by God

[Tit. 1. 2] Himself, Who cannot lie. Upon which account we have more ground to believe what He saith, than we have to believe what we perceive by sense, or gather by reason and discourse : for our senses may deceive us, and so may our reason, but God cannot. And therefore, although matters of sense and reason may seem more evident to us, yet matters of faith, or such things as are asserted by God, the

Supreme Verity, are far more credible than the other, because attested by a Divine and infallible authority.

Now these things being rightly considered, it is easy to observe what kind of faith we ought to have in the Word of God in general; which will give much light to that particular faith which we ought to have in Christ: for, seeing the Scriptures are God's Word, and so every thing in them hath a Divine authority enstamped upon it; hence it follows, that whatsoever we read in Scripture, we are so firmly to believe it, as not to doubt of the truth and certainty of it: insomuch, that God always did, and ever will, expect from His creatures, that they be fully persuaded in themselves of the truth of what He saith, merely because He saith it; so as to take His bare word and testimony for it.

But because this notion, so duly improved, will conduce very much to your right understanding of that which the Scriptures call faith, or believing in God and Christ; I shall further explain it to you in several instances from Holy Scriptures: First, God, you know, told Noah, that He would Gen. 6. 14, utterly "destroy all flesh from off the face of the earth," 17. and therefore bade him prepare an ark wherein to secure himself and family. Noah having received this notice from God Himself, he did not at all doubt of the certainty of it, but without any more ado, in expectation of the flood which God had foretold, he immediately set upon the work which was commanded him, although by computation it was an hundred years before it was accomplished. From whom we may observe the nature as well as the strength of his faith; for having the word of God for it, he was so certain of it, that neither the length of time, nor the many difficulties which he was likely to meet with in it, could in the least discourage him from setting presently upon the work which was enjoined him, whereby "he became heir of the Heb. 11. 7. righteousness which is by faith."

Thus Abraham having received a promise from God that he should have a son, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed, he was so fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of it, that although for the trial of his faith, he was afterwards commanded to slay this very son, yet he readily obeyed, as believing it impossible for God to lie: [Heb. 6. 18.]



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Rom. 4. 20.

and therefore, whatsoever His command was, he was sure His promise would be made good; for which reason he is said to be "strong in faith, giving glory to God." And indeed we may justly admire the height and strength of Abraham's faith in this particular, who was so confident of the truth of God's word, that though God Himself seemed to have changed His mind, yet he could not doubt in the least but that His word would be most certainly fulfilled. This was right believing indeed, and that which the Scripture recommends to us as a pattern and example to walk by.

Exod. 4. 17.

Thus when God had appeared to Moses, and had promised to be with him and assist him in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt, and had told him that he should do signs and miracles only with the wand that was in his hand, he so firmly believed the word of God, that only by stretching forth the rod in his hand, he turned the rivers into blood, the dust into lice, and the day into palpable darkness. He, with that, brought frogs and flies, and many other plagues upon Pharaoh, and his people; yea, with that he "divided the

ch. 14. 21.

Red Sea." And that all this was done by the strength of his faith, is plain from that passage in Numbers, c. xx. which in short was this: the people murmuring for want of water, God bade Moses take the rod, and together with Aaron, speak to the rock, and that should give forth his water, in the presence of the people. Moses and Aaron accordingly gathered the congregation together, and said,

ver. 10.

"Ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Here Moses' faith began to fail, in saying, "Must we do it," when God had told him plainly he should do it. And

ver. 11.

then "he smote the rock twice," which was another instance of his infidelity; for in that he seemed to doubt that once striking of it would not serve the turn, although God had said it should. Upon which God told them, that they did not now believe Him aright, nor sanctify Him before the people, and therefore they should not enter into the land of Canaan. From whence we may observe, that while

ver. 12.

Moses and Aaron remained confident of His word, so long God looked upon them as believing Him; but when once they expressed the least shadow of doubting, then He was presently angry with them, as not believing Him as they

ought: so that He plainly expected from them, and so from all others, that whatsoever He saith be firmly believed, without any hesitancy at all.

As we plainly see Joshua did. For God having told Joshua, that if he and his people compassed the city Jericho seven days, and upon the seventh day should make a long blast with rams' horns, then upon the shouting of the people, the walls should fall down flat: now, though rams' horns might seem but sorry weapons to batter down strong walls with, neither was it very probable that the people could blow them down with their breath, when they shouted; yet Joshua, notwithstanding, being fully persuaded of God's truth and faithfulness to His word, he went on, did as God commanded him, steadfastly believing, that how weak soever the means might seem, yet being managed by Omnipotence itself, they could not but prove effectual; as in the issue you know they did. Josh. 6.  
3-5.

Thus I might instance in most of the Patriarchs and Prophets of the Old Testament, and shew what a strange confidence they had in the word of God, howsoever revealed to them. But that you may not think this to be only the faith of the Old Testament, I shall shew how the same is both commended to, and commanded us in the New.

First, therefore, you read, that when Jesus was walking on the sea, Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water; and He said, Come;" that is, come and walk on the water as I do. Christ having said this, Peter at first strongly confiding in it, did indeed at first walk on the water; but afterwards being afraid of the storm, he began to sink, and prayed Christ to save him; and Christ having taken him up said, Matt. 14.  
28, 29. "O thou of little faith; wherefore didst thou doubt?" ver. 30.  
ver. 31. From whence we may clearly see what kind of faith it was which Christ required of him, even such a faith whereby he should so firmly have believed Christ's word, as not to fear any storms or tempests, nor doubt of Christ's enabling him to do what He had bidden him.

And such a faith it was which the woman of Canaan had, who being fully persuaded from God, that Christ both could and would cure her daughter, although Christ seemed at

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 Matt. 15. 26.  
 v. 27.  
 v. 28.

first to refuse her, saying, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs;" yet she persisting in her suit, and confidently replying, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table;" Christ presently answered, "O woman, great is thy faith! Be it to thee even as thou wilt."

From whence we may observe two things;

First, That Christ Himself called this woman's confidence in Him, Great faith,

ch. 17. 19,  
 20.  
 Mark 11. 22,  
 23, 24.

And, secondly, That her faith being so strong, her request could not be denied, "Be it to thee even as thou wilt;" as if nothing could be denied, or withstand a strong and real faith, as our Saviour Himself tells His Disciples again. And to put it out of all doubt, He saith elsewhere, "Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith, shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." How was it possible for our blessed Lord to have expressed Himself more clearly and fully in this particular, than He doth here? He first bids us have faith in God, and then explains what He means by faith; even such a faith as is opposite to all manner of doubting and hesitancy whatsoever, so as to be fully persuaded in ourselves, that God will most certainly do whatsoever we desire that is good for us.

I should not have insisted so long upon this, but that is a thing very rarely, if ever, before observed, and yet I know nothing that conduceth more to our clear understanding the right nature of saving faith, than this doth; for from the aforesaid examples, and assertions of the Holy Scripture, it is plain, that that faith which God requires of us, is not a mere intellectual assent to the Word of God as true in general, but that there is likewise in it a full persuasion and firm confidence of the truth and certainty of whatsoever God hath promised or asserted in it; which likewise might be further proved, first, from the words which the Holy Ghost useth whereby to express this duty to us; for it is

called sometimes *πειποίθις*, “a persuasion;” sometimes *πληροφορία*, “a full persuasion;” sometimes *παρρησία* “boldness and confidence.” Yea, it is called *ἐλπίζομένων ὑπόστασις*, *πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων*, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” That is, faith makes what we hope for to subsist in a manner in us, and be present already with us; so that we are as fully persuaded that we shall have them, as if we had them already in possession: yea, it is the evidence and demonstration of things not seen, making us as certain of them as if we really saw them before our eyes.

Secondly, This appears also in that faith, in Scripture, is ordinarily opposed to fear and diffidence, as, “Be not afraid, only believe.” “But let him ask in faith,” saith St. James, “nothing wavering,” or nothing doubting. And what St. James calls there “praying in faith,” St. Paul expresseth the same by “lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.” From whence it is plain, that faith, in a Scripture sense, is opposed to doubting and fear.

Nay, thirdly, although Scripture were silent, reason itself cannot but dictate this great truth to us, that whatsoever the Supreme Being of the world, Who is Truth Itself, saith, ought to be received with the highest confidence imaginable; so that we can never be too confident of the infallible certainty of every thing that He either asserts or promiseth to us. For, as the Apostle tells us, “God cannot lie,” every lie or falsehood being a contradiction to His very nature or essence: and therefore it is impossible for us to have so much ground to believe any thing in the world beside, as we have to be fully persuaded of the truth of every thing that is attested by Him. And hence it is, that whatsoever we have God’s word for, He expects that we neither doubt the certainty, nor fear the performance of it, but that we be fully persuaded in ourselves, that what He commands is good, what He saith is true, and that whatsoever He hath promised shall most certainly be fulfilled, not doubting in the least of it, because it is He that hath commanded, said, and promised it. And so near as we come to this, so far we may be said, in a Scripture sense, to believe, and no further.

Now, the nature of a Divine faith in general being thus



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cleared, it is easy to observe what is that particular faith which you and I must have, in order to our being justified and saved by Christ. For, as the Most High God hath been pleased to reveal many great and mysterious truths to us in the Holy Scriptures, which the Divine light of nature could never have discovered; and though it be beyond our shallow capacities to comprehend them, yet we are therefore to believe them, because God asserts them, so as not to doubt in the least of the truth and certainty of them. So likewise He hath been pleased, of His infinite mercy to fallen man, to make us many gracious and faithful promises of pardon and Salvation, if we sincerely repent, and do what we can to walk in newness of life. But all these promises are made and confirmed to us only in and through Christ, as the 2 Cor. 1. 20. Apostle testifieth, saying, that "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen;" that is, in Him they are most sure and certain to all that lay hold of them. Hence, therefore, as we are to be fully persuaded in ourselves of the truth of God's Word in general, so likewise are we in a particular manner to be fully persuaded in ourselves of the truth and faithfulness of these promises which are made unto us in Jesus Christ, so as to trust and rely confidently upon them for the pardon of our sins, and the Salvation of our souls in particular. And this is that which the Scriptures call "believing in Jesus Christ;" and that which the Apostle here bids the gaoler do, that he may be saved.

But because this is a matter of extraordinary importance, and your eternal Salvation depends upon the due performance of it, I shall further confirm and explain it to you, from several instances in Holy Scripture. And for this I know not whom we can better consult than St. Paul himself, who spake these words in my text, and cannot but be acknowledged to have been as true a believer as ever lived; and therefore we will consider what kind of faith his was; for if ours be like his, we cannot but be saved, as he doubtless is.

Now, first, we find St. Paul believing, yea, confidently asserting, that Christ not only died for sinners in general, but for him in particular; "I live," saith He, "by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." He did not only believe that Christ was a Saviour,

but he was confident that he was his Saviour; and so applied the general promises of the Gospel unto his own particular person. And so questionless every one, that would truly believe, must of necessity do. For to believe only in general, that Christ died for mankind, is no more than what a formal professor, a glozing hypocrite, nay, it is no more than what the Devils themselves may do: they believe as much as this, but are never the better for it. <sup>[James 2. 19.]</sup> And, therefore, to speak only of a general assent to the Word of God, as the Papists and others do, is to say nothing at all of the real essence of true and saving faith, which consists only in a fiducial reliance or dependence upon Christ for the pardon of our sins in a particular manner; that whereas the promises of pardon by Christ are made only in general, not to you or me in particular, but to all that repent, whosoever they be; he that would believe, must apply those general promises to himself, as particularly specified and so concerned in them. As when God had promised Joshua, and in him all true penitents, saying, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee:" this St. Paul applies to himself. <sup>[Josh. 1. 5.]</sup> So here Christ hath said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest:" so then we may boldly say, Christ calls us, and will give rest to us in particular, if we be weary and heavy laden. Yea, saith a believing soul, doth Christ call such as are weary of their sins? I am such a one, and therefore I am sure He calls me, and will give rest to me as well as to any other person in the world. Thus St. Paul, <sup>[Heb. 13. 5, 6.]</sup> "This is a faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom," saith he, "I am chief;" and so he appropriates the general proposition to his own particular person: as if he had said, 'Christ came to save all penitent sinners, but I am such a one, and therefore he came to save me:' this is believing in Christ indeed. <sup>[Matt. 11. 28.]</sup>

Which that you may still clearer understand, I desire you in the next place to observe how St. Paul acts his faith; where you may see how he matters not any charge that could be brought against him; nor fears any condemnation that could be brought upon him: it is true, the Law had accused him, and justice had condemned him; but what

Rom. 8. 33,  
34, 35, 37,  
38.

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then? "Christ," saith he, "is dead, Christ is risen, yea, He is now at the right hand of God making intercession for us." This is that his faith was so firmly fixed upon, that it made him rejoice and triumph over all, both fear and danger: and as for tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, sword, and the like, he laughed at these things as no way able to separate him from the love of Christ: "Nay, in these things," saith he, "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." And if ye would know the reason of this his confidence, you may see it in the next words: "For," saith he, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord:" where you may see faith riding in its triumphant chair, defying grim death itself, and trampling upon every thing that did but seem to stand in its way to glory. And as St. Paul there acteth his faith himself, so certainly he adviseth the gaoler in my text to do; even not only to assent to the Word of God in general, nor only to believe in general, that Christ was the Saviour of mankind, but to believe in Him so as to trust, depend, and confidently rely upon Him for the Salvation of his immortal soul, nothing doubting but that He is both able and willing to do it; yea, fully persuaded that He will do it too. And this, therefore, is that faith in Christ which we must all have, if we ever desire to be saved by Him. But then you will say, Doth not such a faith as this is encourage security, and embolden men in sinful presumption, making as if they cannot miss of Salvation, if they be but confident they shall be saved? To this I answer,

1. It is impossible to preach the Gospel so, but that a carnal and sinful heart may wrest it so as to suck poison instead of honey from it; such being apt to take all occasions of "turning the grace of God into wantonness." And therefore the Apostle himself, when he treated upon this subject, even our justification by faith in Christ, he was still forced to prevent this objection by a peremptory denial of the consequence. But it is one thing to speak of the true nature of this doctrine, another thing to speak of the abuse

[Jude 4.]

Rom. 3. 31;  
ch. 6. 1.

which corrupt men make of it. There are some, as the Apostle tells us, “who wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction;” but it does not follow, that they ought not therefore to read them, nor hear them read. So here, although some may abuse this doctrine of faith to the cherishing themselves in impiety and licentiousness; yet it doth not follow but that it both may and ought to be explained and preached to you; because though some may abuse it, yet none can be saved without it. And we must not conceal any thing from you that is necessary for your Salvation, for fear that others may make a bad use of it; for if they will destroy themselves, it does not follow that we must suffer you to be destroyed too, without telling you the very truth how you may be saved.

2. But, secondly and principally, my answer to this objection is, that whatsoever men of corrupt minds may think, no man whatsoever can thus believe in Christ, but he must of necessity repent and obey God to the utmost of his power. For,

1. Although it be only by this particular faith in Christ, which I have now described, that we can be either justified or saved; yet none can thus believe in Christ, but he that first is fully persuaded in himself of the truth and certainty of the whole Word of God, which it is impossible for any man in the world to be, and yet to live in the constant commission of any known sin, or the wilful neglect of any known duty. For such a persuasion as this is cannot but have that influence upon him, and make such impressions in his mind, as to incline his will to the observance of whatsoever is required of him.

2dly. No man can thus firmly and confidently believe that he shall be saved by Christ, that doth not observe such things as Christ Himself saith he must do, or not be saved. For when Christ hath revealed His will and pleasure, that He will save only such and such persons, how is it possible for any man to be persuaded that he shall be saved by Him, that is not such a person as Christ requires him to be in order thereunto: but Christ requires repentance, and universal righteousness, without which, He saith, we shall not be saved. And therefore they that do not repent, and are

[2 Pet. 3.  
16.]

Luke 13. 3.  
Matt. 5. 20.



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 CXXXIII. believe they shall be saved by Him? Especially considering  
 that He calls none else, nor promiseth rest to any but such  
 as are weary and heavy laden with their sins.

Hence, lastly, such a faith as I have now described, doth  
 of itself produce a pious and good life; for it purifies the  
 heart. And the reason is, because he that believeth in  
 Christ as his Priest to make atonement for him, cannot but  
 believe in Him as his King too to rule and govern him,  
 otherwise he believes not wholly in Christ, but only in part of  
 Him: for He was made our Sanctification as well as Right-  
 eousness. And no man can believe in Him at all, that doth  
 not believe in Him for all that He hath procured for us.  
 And, therefore, so long as you continue in your sins, it is in  
 vain for you to speak of believing in Christ, for you do  
 not, whatsoever you may say or think; ye are still but  
 infidels.

Now, from what you have heard upon this subject, none  
 of you but may easily learn that which is the greatest con-  
 cern which you either have or can have in the whole world,  
 even how to be saved: howsoever, that you may be sure to  
 apprehend it aright, I shall in few terms shew you the way  
 and method you are to take, that every soul amongst you  
 may live and be happy for ever; which, if you desire to be,  
 observe but these few rules, and the work is done.

1. Repent of your former sins; I do not doubt but you  
 all cannot but know every one the sins of his own heart and  
 life: and whatsoever sins you know yourselves to be guilty  
 of, you must of necessity forsake them, otherwise it is impos-  
 sible for you to be saved: you must first repent, before it is  
 possible for you to believe the Gospel.

2dly. Being truly humbled for, and resolved against your  
 former sins, you must likewise, for the future, walk in holi-  
 ness and righteousness all the days of your life, ordering all  
 your thoughts, words, and actions according to the com-  
 mands of God, to the best of your skill and power, sincerely  
 endeavouring to commit no sin wilfully, nor yet to omit any  
 duty either to God or man, but always striving to "live so-  
 berly, righteously and godly in this present world," and to  
 "shine as lights in it."

[Tit. 2. 12.]

[Phil. 2.  
15.]

Lastly ; When you have done all, trust not to your repentance or obedience, for they will both fail you ; but trust and confide in the Lord Jesus Christ, humbly and firmly believing that God for His sake will pardon the sins which you have repented of, and accept of these duties which you sincerely, though imperfectly, perform unto Him ; and by consequence that He will make you both holy here, and happy hereafter. This was the end of Christ's coming into the world, and this is the sum and substance of all the promises which are sealed unto you with His blood, and therefore you need not doubt of it, but rather have all the reason in the world steadfastly to believe it, yea, and be confident of it. And therefore you not only may, but must be fully persuaded in yourselves, that by the virtue of Christ's merit your persons shall be justified, and your duties accepted ; that by the assistance of His grace and Spirit your lusts shall be all subdued, and your natures sanctified, and by consequence that in and through Him your souls shall be glorified with God for ever. And let me tell you, you have God's Own Word for it, and therefore you may be confident and assured of it. For if you be not failing to yourselves, I am sure He will never fail you. Away, therefore, with all diffident and doubting thoughts, as much as possibly you can, and stir up yourselves to lay fast hold on Christ, firmly and steadfastly believing that God, for His sake, hath not only pardoned your former sins, but will bring you ere long to everlasting glory. This is the way, the only way whereby every person here present may get to Heaven. Do but thus " believe in Christ, and you shall be saved."

## SERMON CXXXIV.

THE CHAIN OF EVANGELICAL GRACES.

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2 PET. i. 5, 6, 7.

*And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ;  
and to virtue, knowledge ;  
And to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ;  
and to patience, godliness ;  
And to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity.*

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[2Pet. 1.1.]

ver. 2.

ver. 3.

SIMON PETER, a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, writing this epistle to those who “ had obtained like precious faith ” with him and the rest of the Apostles, in “ the righteousness of our God and Saviour,” as he expressly calls Jesus Christ, begins it much after the same manner as St. Paul begins his epistles, with this solemn benediction and prayer, “ Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord : ” and that they might better apprehend the meaning and reason of this Apostolical salutation, he adds immediately, “ according as His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue ; ” whereby he puts them in mind, that Almighty God hath given us the grace and peace which he had wished them, and all things necessary to make us holy and happy, through the knowledge of the said Jesus our Lord,

“ Who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous [1 Pet. 2.9.] light, by the glory and power that shineth forth in the Gospel.”

And lest they should wonder how this could be, he further adds, “ Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and v. 4. precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust;” as if he had said, God hath given us the great things before mentioned in Christ, because He hath given us the promise of them; so that it is our own fault if we have them not. For in Christ He hath promised us such illuminations and assistances of His Holy Spirit, that if we do but believe and trust, as we ought, in them, we may thereby be instructed and enabled to mortify all worldly and carnal affections, and to purify our corrupt nature to that degree, that we may be made partakers of the Divine Nature, not of the essence or substance of it, but so as that we shall be made over again as we were at first, in the image and likeness of God, holy, as “ He who hath [1 Pet. 1. 15.] called us is holy :” which, therefore, is elsewhere expressed by our being “ partakers of His holiness;” and they who Heb. 12. 10. are such, are certainly possessed, according to His promise, of “ grace and peace,” and “ all things pertaining to life and godliness.”

The way being thus opened, the Apostle brings in the words of my text, saying, “ And besides this,” or rather (as the original words, *καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο* may be rendered) “ and accordingly, or therefore, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue.” For this is plainly an inference drawn from the premises, like that of St. Paul, who having discoursed of the promises which God hath made us in the new covenant, draws this conclusion from them; “ Having there- 2 Cor. 7. 1. fore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” So here St. Peter, having acquainted those who believed in Christ, that God in Him hath given them such promises, that if they were not failing to themselves in the use and application of them, they might be partakers of the Divine nature; he therefore adviseth them “ to give all diligence, to add to their faith virtue,” and so



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on till they were accordingly sanctified, or made holy in all manner of conversation. This being the greatest encouragement that could be given them to do it, and that which would make them inexcusable, unless they did it. For [2 Cor. 3. 5.] although they were "not sufficient of themselves to think any thing as of themselves," much less to attain and exercise such great virtues as are here specified, so that it would be in vain to attempt it by their own power; yet, seeing Almighty [2 Cor. 12. 9.] God Himself hath promised to assist them in it, that "His grace shall be sufficient for them, and His strength made [Phil. 4. 13.] perfect in their weakness," so that they may "do all things through Christ Who strengtheneth them," this should put them upon using their utmost care and diligence to add one grace unto another, till they have completed the whole chain, so as to be restored to that Divine temper of mind, that they may, according to their capacity, be like to God Himself. It is now their own fault if they do it not, and it will be their joy and glory if they do it.

Now, as St. Peter wrote this to those who believed in Christ, I am to repeat the same, and to explain it to such as profess to do so; and I hope really do it: for, I suppose, all here present are baptized into Christ, and so made members of His body. If there be any who are not, I have nothing at present to say to them, but only to wish them to have a care of themselves, and to come into the Church, and so to Christ while they may, lest being not found in Christ, they be lost and undone for ever. But I hope there are none here present so careless of their own welfare, but that you are all in the number of Christ's Disciples, being made so by being baptized according to His institution and command, and accordingly believe in Him as your only Saviour, to save you from your sins, and to bring you at last to Heaven. It is to you that these words belong; you are all in the number of those who are here required "to add to your faith, virtue."

If you had not faith, you could not add virtue to it. But from your presence here at this time, I cannot but in charity conclude that you have it already, and therefore need not advise you to get it. Howsoever, it may not be amiss to put you in mind how to act and exercise it so, as

that you may attain “the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” You say you believe in Christ; and I suppose you do so: but what do ye believe in Christ for? For the pardon of your sins? Ye do well: ye may, and ought to believe in Him for that: for, He being the propitiation for your sins, in Him they may be all pardoned, though none can be pardoned without Him. But your sins can never be pardoned, unless you first repent of them. And therefore you must first believe in Christ to give you repentance, and then forgiveness of sins. As God hath promised in Jesus Christ to give you a new heart, and to renew a right spirit within you; that you may walk in His ways, and keep His statutes, you must first believe in Him for the performance of such promises in the use of the means which He hath ordained for that purpose; such as fasting, and praying, and watching, and reading and hearing His Holy Word. These things which are in your own power you must constantly exercise yourselves in; you must never neglect your private devotions, nor any opportunities that you can get of performing them in public. And you must perform them all in the Name of Christ, believing and trusting on Him to co-operate with them, that they may be effectual to the “turning you from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God;” and so to your hearty and sincere repentance for all your sins. And when you have done that, then you may and must believe in Christ for the pardon of them, not doubting but that God for His sake will acquit and discharge you from all the punishments that you were obliged to undergo for them.

[1 Pet. 1.9.]

Acts 5. 31.

[Ps. 51.10.]

[Acts 26. 18.]

And so, if you would act your faith aright, whatsoever God hath said in His holy Word, you must not doubt in the least of it, but be fully persuaded in your minds that it is as infallibly true and certain, as you are or can be of any thing you see, or hear, or understand; and more too; forasmuch as you have the Word of God Himself for that, which is infinitely more than you have for any thing that you perceive only by your senses or reason. It is indeed the firmest ground that you can ever have to believe any thing at all. Thus it is that you ought to act your faith in every thing which God hath revealed to you. So far as you know

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it to be revealed by Him, you must take His Word for it, without troubling yourselves with inquiring any further into it. It is sufficient that He who cannot lie, hath said it; and He said it, that you might believe it upon His Word, which therefore you are bound to do, in the highest manner that it is possible for you to believe any thing in the world.

Thus you must believe that God in the beginning created the Heaven and the earth, as certainly as if you had seen Him do it: that He is wheresoever you are, as certainly as that you yourselves are there: that Jesus Christ His only Son is of the same substance, or one with the Father, as certainly as that He is His Son: that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary, as certainly as that He was ever conceived and born at all: that He died for your sins, as certainly as that ever you committed them. Thus you must believe, that you must one day stand before His tribunal, as certainly as if you were now before it; that you must then give Him an account of your whole lives, as certainly as that you are now alive: and that He is now in Heaven making intercession for you, as certainly as you believe that you yourselves are upon the earth.

[Rom. 8.  
34.]

And thus you ought to believe whatsoever you find to be revealed in the Scriptures, as certainly as you find it to be there revealed, without making any doubt or question of it; particularly the great promises which God hath there made in Jesus Christ, to cleanse and purify your hearts by His Holy Spirit; you must believe that He will perform them, and then He will most certainly perform them to you. So that by this means ye may be enabled by Him to attain and exercise all such graces as are necessary to fit you for His service upon earth, and to live with Him in Heaven.

Such a faith as this is can never be alone, but will always have a train of other graces and virtues attending upon it; which you are therefore commanded to add to your faith, as a mark and sign that it is such a faith as the Gospel requires: and that which you must add in the first place, and most immediately to it, is virtue. For Almighty God, in Whom ye believe, doth here expressly require you by His Apostle, "to add to your faith virtue." Virtue, I know, is a word that is commonly used for morality, or probity in



general, even for all such good dispositions and qualities as are required to make a virtuous and good man. But many of them being hereafter particularly named as well as virtue, the word in this place is plainly taken in a more restrained sense, wherein it is sometimes used for courage, resolution, and zeal for the service and honour of God, which naturally follows upon a firm and steadfast faith. For he that believes in Almighty God the Governor of the world, and in Jesus Christ the Saviour of mankind, must needs cleave to Him with full purpose of heart, and resolve steadfastly with himself to serve and glorify Him, whatsoever comes of it, that so he may continue in His love and favour. What noble exploits did the Saints of old perform! What hazards did they run! What difficulties did they overcome by faith! <sup>Heb. 11.</sup> With what undaunted courage did St. Paul go through all the troubles he met with, and defy the bonds and afflictions which he knew beforehand would befall him in doing his duty! “But none of these things,” saith he, “move me, <sup>Acts 20. 24.</sup> neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.” And elsewhere he saith, “I have learned <sup>Phil. 4. 11. 13.</sup> in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” And accordingly he adviseth all that believe, to “be strong <sup>Ephes. 6. 10.</sup> in the Lord, and the power of His might.” This therefore is that true magnanimity and fortitude, that Christian virtue which you are here commanded to add unto your faith. As you believe in the Almighty Disposer of all things, you must not be afraid of any thing that can happen to you in your serving Him. As you must not run yourselves into danger, so you must not run from any duty to escape it. Whatsoever rubs or impediments you meet with in the way to Heaven, you must not regard them, but still go on, “pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling <sup>[Phil. 3. 14.]</sup> of God in Jesus Christ.” This is to be virtuous indeed, to “quit yourselves like men,” like Christians, like those who <sup>[1 Cor. 16. 13.]</sup> hope to be with Christ ere long in Heaven, when nothing upon earth can hinder your progress thither, but you still keep on an even course, notwithstanding all the discouragement



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ments that men or Devils can lay before you. Unless you have and exercise such virtue as this, you may conclude that you have no faith at all; or that which St. James calls James 2. 26. a "dead faith," that will stand you in no stead. And therefore as ever you desire to shew yourselves to be Christ's faithful disciples, you must take special care to add to your faith this virtue, or Christian zeal and courage, so as to be [Luke 1. 6.] steadfastly purposed to "walk in all the commandments [Acts 24. 16.] and ordinances of the Lord, blameless;" to "keep your consciences void of all offence both towards God, and to- wards men," whatsoever it cost you; and to be "steadfast, 1 Cor. 15. 58. unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

But as you add to your "faith, virtue;" so you must "add to virtue, knowledge;" that you may know how to use your virtue aright, and not misapply and abuse it to ill purposes, as ignorant, though well-meaning people are apt Rom. 10. 2. to do. St. Paul testified of the Jews, that they had "a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Their zeal for God was in itself good and commendable, but it not being according to knowledge, what mischief did they do with it! They killed the Lord of Glory, and afterwards His Disciples, John 16. 2. thinking that they did God service in it; and all for want of knowing His will, and their duty to Him.

There are many such among us at this day, who being led not by the light of God's Word, but that which they pretend to be within them, are fallen from the faith of Christ into such damnable errors and heresies which overturn the foundations of the Christian religion, and yet are so conceited of themselves, so resolute and obstinate in the anti-christian way which they are got into, that they will do or suffer any thing rather than go one step out of it; and think they do God service, if they can but seduce others into the same pit of destruction with themselves. Neither are [2 Thes. 2. 11.] these the only people that are justly given up to "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie," and stand in it to the last. There are many other, both among ourselves, and in other places, who having once, by Satan's procurement, espoused an erroneous opinion or conceit, how extravagant soever it be, will never part with it upon any ac-

count whatsoever; no, not to save their lives, or their immortal souls: and all for want of knowing the truth, and the things that belong to their everlasting peace.

It is true, this cannot be properly called virtue, but rather pride and obstinacy, one of the Devil's devices to hold those fast, which he hath once got into his clutches. Howsoever, this shews how necessary it is to "add knowledge to your virtue;" that as you are zealously affected, so you may always be so in a good cause, in such only as will bear the test at the last day.

For which purpose you must "search the Scriptures," [John 5. or hear them read and expounded by such as are sent of<sup>39.</sup>] God to do it; not by such as come of their own heads, or are employed by the Deceiver of mankind to corrupt the faith, and to infuse into you such notions and principles which are contrary to the doctrine of the Gospel. Remember the caution which the Lord Jesus hath given you with His Own mouth, saying, "Beware of false prophets, which come unto you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." Neither must you think it enough to read or hear the Holy Scriptures read, but you must mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that "you may grow in grace," [2 Pet. 3. and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,"<sup>18.</sup>] every day more and more. To which end I know nothing will conduce more than your constant attendance at the prayers of the Church, where you have God's Word solemnly read and delivered to you in His Name, and by His authority. And the Prayers also and the Collects are so wisely contrived, that by them you may be instructed in all things necessary for you to believe and do, as well as obtain the grace and assistance of God's Holy Spirit to believe and do accordingly; and so may "add to virtue, knowledge;" such knowledge as will "make you wise unto salvation," and direct your virtue, and keep it within the bounds which God hath set it. [2 Tim. 3. <sup>15.</sup>]

But then you must "add to your knowledge, temperance;" without which you can never make a right use of your knowledge, nor do that which it directs you to. For though knowledge be the act only of the soul, yet while the soul is united to the body, and useth the organs of

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the body, especially the animal spirits, in its operations, unless the body be kept in good temper, the soul cannot keep its thoughts in order, nor make any good use of the knowledge it hath attained; for it will still be overpowered by the humour that is predominant in the body. And there-

Luke 21. 34.

fore our great Lord and Master commands you to "take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." Whereby He forewarns you, that intemperance and excess in meat and drink, or any thing else, makes all men, even the most knowing, at all times incapable of minding the concerns of the other world, or doing any thing as they ought, in order to it. His Apostle also puts you in mind of the same thing; where, speaking of our Christian race, he saith,

1 Cor. 9. 25.

"Every one that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." As if he had said, 'They who strive to get a crown only of fading leaves or flowers, are temperate in all things; how much more should they be so, who strive for the crown of eternal glory!' As all, I suppose, here present do. But you can never obtain it without

Tit. 2. 12.

sobriety and temperance in all things; and therefore "the grace of God that bringeth salvation teacheth you, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts," you first "live soberly," then "righteously and godly in this present world;" because, unless you live soberly, you can never be either righteous or godly, and, by consequence, never get to Heaven.

Wherefore, as ever you desire to come there, you must take special care to avoid all manner of luxury and excess,

Rom. 13. 14.

especially in meats and drinks. You must not "make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof;" and for that purpose you must avoid all occasions of intemperance and debauchery, and shun those who are addicted to it, as much as if they were infected with the plague; you must strictly observe the wise man's counsel, "Be not among wine-bibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh. For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty." Many of them do so, as ye know, in this world; but in the next

Prov. 23.  
20, 21.



they will all be so poor and miserable, that they will not have so much as one drop of water to cool their tongues. And therefore be advised to have a care of yourselves. If any of you have hitherto indulged yourselves in these brutish vices, leave them off immediately, lest ye be damned for ever: and still carry this in your minds, as a most certain rule, that whatsoever knowledge you have, it will signify nothing to you, unless you “add temperance” to it.

Nor unless “to temperance you add patience;” which is as necessary to keep the mind in order, as temperance is to keep the body so: for as intemperance discomposeth the one, so doth impatience the other. It puts the soul into a fret and ferment, and all its faculties into so much disorder and confusion, that it can do nothing regularly, being for the present besides itself: and therefore our blessed Saviour, Who knows our frame better than we ourselves do, when He had told His Disciples what troubles they should meet with in the world, said, “In your patience possess ye Luke 21. 19. your souls;” implying, that if they were impatient under any thing that happened, they could not keep their souls in a right temper and disposition for the service He expected from them. Neither did this concern those only to whom it was spoken, but all that believe in Him, and you among the rest. Whatsoever falls out, though it be never so cross to your expectation or desire, take all the care you can that your minds be not disturbed at it, but by patience and meekness keep them as quiet and sedate as possibly ye can. I know this may be something difficult to some tempers; such, I mean, as are naturally apt to take fire upon the least occasion. But though nature be strong, grace is stronger: by it a man may alter and amend his natural constitution, if he will but set himself in good earnest about it; for the grace of Christ is sufficient for all that believe in Him, if they will but apply and use it as they ought, to restrain the most unruly passions, and keep them within their bounds, as it behoves you all to do, as ever you desire to eschew evil, and do good in the world: “for the wrath James 1. 20. of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” When a man is in a fret, impatient or angry, as many are at every thing that happens otherwise than they would have it, he



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may do much mischief, but can do nothing well, or pleasing unto God: and therefore you had all need to set a strict watch over yourselves, that you may never be surprised into any passion: but, whatsoever falls out that may be apt to ruffle and discompose you, do but pause awhile, and give yourselves time to recollect your thoughts, and consider whence it comes, whither it tends, and how much good may be designed you in it, and you may soon see what infinite cause you have to submit patiently to it, and so learn by degrees this divine art of “adding to your temperance, patience.”

“And to patience, godliness;” without which it is not true Christian patience: for that proceeds only from a due sense of God, and of that infinite wisdom and goodness which He manifesteth in the government of the world and all things in it. But where that is, there must needs be godliness, or the fear of God, expressing itself in doing all one can to serve, worship and please Him; which therefore must be your chief care and study as long as you live in the world, this being the chief end of your living in it. Ye must not spend your time as most people do, in eating, or drinking, or sleeping, or playing, or working only for the things of this life; but “whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do,” ye must “do all to the glory of God.” Ye must strive all ye can to promote His honour, and shew forth His praise in the place where He hath set you, and according to the ability that He hath given you for it: and for that purpose you must never omit your private devotions morning and evening, nor neglect His public worship when you can have an opportunity to perform it. You must delight in the law of the Lord, and exercise yourselves in it both day and night. You must take all occasions that you can get of celebrating the memory of the death He suffered for you in your own nature, by receiving the Sacrament of His Last Supper, with an hearty repentance for all your sins, and steadfast faith in Him for the pardon of them. Whensoever you approach or make your addresses to Him, you must carry yourselves before Him with that “reverence and godly fear” whereby you may testify and discover your acknowledgment of His supreme authority; and so may be

1 Cor. 10. 31.

Psalms 1. 2.

[Heb. 12.  
28.]

truly said to adore and worship Him. You must use these and all the means of grace, heartily and sincerely trusting in God your Saviour to make them effectual to you, that ye may obtain grace by them to do whatsoever He requires of you. And accordingly you must love the Lord your God with all your hearts, you must fear nothing so much as His displeasure; you must desire His love and favour above all things in the world; ye must firmly believe all the great truths that He hath revealed to you; ye must live with a constant dependance upon the promises that He hath made you; ye must rejoice in His Holy Name above all things else; ye must praise and thank Him for all the blessings ye have received from Him. In short, ye must “walk in all [Luke 1. 6.] the commandments and ordinances of the Lord” to the utmost of your power, “blameless:” and yet not expect to merit any thing by it, but trust only in the merits of your Saviour to make what you do acceptable in His sight. This is to be godly indeed.

And to this “godliness” you must “add brotherly kindness;” which you cannot choose but do, if it be such godliness as I have now described: for “brotherly kindness” is nothing else but that love and kindness which one brother hath for another. But if ye be godly, ye are regenerate or born of God and made His children; and therefore must needs love those who have the same Father, and are of the same family with yourselves, and so are really your brethren begotten of the same Father: and the Apostle observes, “He that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is 1 John 5. 1. begotten of him.” And unless ye do that, unless ye love the children of God, ye may be confident that ye are not in the number of them, nor have any love for God Himself, but are “still in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of [Acts 8. 23.] iniquity.” And therefore if ye would manifest yourselves to be godly, ye must love those who are so; ye must do good to all, but “especially unto them who are of the Gal. 6. 10. household of faith;” ye must have a particular kindness for them above all men, for that reason, because they are your brethren in Christ Jesus; and so “add to your godliness, brotherly kindness.”

But then to “your brotherly kindness ye must add cha-

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- Matt. 5. 44. any wrong you have received: but you must "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and
- John 13. 35. persecute you." This is that which Christ requires of all His Disciples, and makes the distinguishing character betwixt them and all other people; that most excellent gift of
- Col. 3. 14. "charity, which is the bond of perfectness;" that perfectly ties all men together, and all other graces and virtues in
- Rom. 13. 10. every man that hath it, so that he fulfils "the whole law;" and therefore ye are here commanded to add this to all the other, to crown and perfect them, that they may be really such as the Gospel requires: that ye may want nothing, but
- [2 Tim. 3. 17.] be "furnished in every good work," which ye can never be, unless ye "add to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity."

Thus we have briefly run through the whole "chain of Evangelical graces," which ye are here enjoined to put together with the utmost of your care and diligence. "Giving all diligence," saith the Apostle, "add to your faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." And verily this requires all the diligence that ye can possibly use, forasmuch as it is a matter of the greatest consequence that ye have to do in the world. It is the one thing necessary. How diligent soever ye may be in your calling, and how much soever ye may get by it, you will not be one jot the better for it at the long run, unless you get to Heaven; and that you can never do, unless ye be first possessed of these heavenly virtues, to qualify and fit you for it. And if ye think it an easy matter to get there, ye have just cause to suspect that ye never yet set about it in good earnest: for if ye have, ye cannot but have found it the

hardest task that ye ever undertook ; and that all the diligence ye can use is little enough, if not too little for it ; ye may perhaps think it easy enough to attain and exercise some of these graces, but unless ye have them all, ye had as good have none ; for the want of any one of them will spoil all the rest, and make them insignificant and useless ; whereas if they all go together, they will assist and influence one another, so as to carry you through the whole compass of your duty, and “ make you meet to be partakers [Col. 1.12.] of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

This is the first reason which the Apostle here gives why they should give all diligence to do what he here adviseth, saying, “ For if these things be in you, and abound, they <sup>ver. 8.</sup> make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” If these things, all these things before-mentioned, faith, and virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity, if they be all in you, and abound, so as to exert and put forth themselves according to their several ways of working, they will “ purge your <sup>[Heb. 9. 14.]</sup> consciences from dead works to serve the living God ;” rectifying the temper both of your souls and bodies, so that ye shall be no longer barren, or as the word signifies, unactive <sup>[ἀργούς.]</sup> or idle, but shall bring forth the fruits of righteousness, and do all such good works which God requires of those whom He calls to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ ; whereas without these things ye are but as so many dry trees that bear no fruit, but only cumber the ground, and therefore must ere long be cut down and cast into the fire ; that everlasting fire that is prepared for the Devil and his angels. <sup>[Matt. 25. 41.]</sup>

Have a care that this be not your case ; as it will most certainly be, unless ye practise those plain and necessary things that ye have now heard of. For as the Apostle here argues in the next place, “ He that lacketh these things is <sup>v. 9.</sup> blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” He is blind, or at least purblind, so that he can see nothing but what lies just before him, the things of this present world. As for the other world, and the things which belong to that, they are far off, quite out of his sight, so that he hath no sense or feeling of



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them; they being seen or perceived only by such whose hearts are cleansed and purified by faith, and virtue, and knowledge, and all the rest of those Christian graces that are here spoken of. And although he was once purged from his sins by the blood of Christ in the Sacrament of Baptism, he hath now forgotten that: he hath forgotten that he was ever made a Christian, and therefore lives as if he was not. So do the greatest part of those who are called Christians, even all who do not add to their faith, virtue; and to virtue, all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, which Christ hath promised to those who truly believe in Him.

But who is there among us that doth this, or so much as strives to do it? I fear there are but few, but hope there may be some; and heartily wish that all here present would be in the number of them. For this is not a thing that may be done or left undone at pleasure, without any harm or prejudice to yourselves; but it is a thing that must be done, or else you must be undone both now and for ever; both your present and eternal welfare depends upon it.

And blessed be God, you may all do it, if ye will: if ye will but set yourselves seriously and diligently, as ye are here commanded, about it, and constantly use the means which God hath ordained for it, trusting in Him to assist and bless you in it: for His grace is sufficient for all, and for you as well as for any others. Many others have found it so by experience; and so may you as well as they, if you will but follow their steps, and make that use of it which they did.

And how happy would ye then be! Ye may perhaps think yourselves happy enough already. If ye have but a large estate, a great deal of money, a good stock, or a brisk trade, and can add house to house, and field to field, ye may please yourselves with your present condition, without troubling your heads about "adding to your faith, virtue; to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge," such other things as respect your future state. Though I cannot pretend to know your thoughts, it is easy to guess that this is at the bottom of them. But I beseech you to consider, that ye must not always live as ye now do; for you must not always live

upon the earth: the time will come when you must die, as certainly as ye are now alive; and then, whose must those things be that ye now get? None of yours to be sure: they will do you no good, nor perhaps any body else; but may ruin those you leave them to, as well as yourselves that got them. Whereas, by giving all diligence to add one grace to another, and one degree of grace unto another, so as to become every day more and more virtuous, and wise, and temperate, and patient, and godly, and loving to the brethren, and charitable to all men; by this means you will grow rich in faith and good works; you will live always under the favour and protection of the Almighty; you will have His blessing upon all ye have while you live, and when ye die, you will be advanced to the crown of glory, and live in perfect peace and happiness for ever; and all through Him in Whom ye believe, the eternal Son of God: "To Whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honour, praise and glory, both now and for ever."

## SERMON CXXXV.

THE DUTY OF TEMPERANCE AND SOBRIETY.

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LUKE xxi. 34.

*And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.*

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INTENDING, by God's assistance, to shew you how great a virtue it is to live temperately and soberly in the world, and how odious and loathsome a thing it is to be drunken: out of the many places of Holy Scripture which might serve for that purpose, I have chosen these words from whence to do it, as being the words of Christ Himself, uttered not by a Prophet or Apostle, but with His Own mouth. For seeing you, to whom I speak, all profess yourselves to be His servants and disciples, ye cannot surely but hearken very diligently to what your Lord and Master hath said to you: as knowing that nothing ever came out of His sacred mouth but what was perfectly true, and just, and good in itself, and likewise necessary to be known and observed by you, and by all who profess to believe in Him, and hope to be saved by Him; especially considering that you must all ere long stand before His judgment-seat, where He will pass a final and irrevocable sentence, either of absolution, or else of condemnation, upon every one of you, according as ye have or have not believed what He hath taught, and done what He hath bidden you. And seeing "He came into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him

might be saved," while He was here He took care to instruct mankind in their whole duty, and to put them in mind of the strict account they must give before Him at the last day, how they have performed it. And that ye may always have your accounts ready, He hath told you beforehand, that you must not expect any great warning of His coming to judge the world, for that the time is kept secret in the Father's breast; "Of that day and hour," saith He, "knoweth Matt. 24. 36. no man, no, not the Angels of Heaven, but my Father only;" and therefore He adviseth you to be always ready, "for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man 5. 44. cometh," and for that purpose He would have you always to be upon your watch, constantly expecting the sound of the trumpet to summon you to appear before His tribunal. And being very loth to surprise you, or take you at any disadvantage, He requires you above all things to keep yourselves in such a temper both of mind and body, as you will wish to be found in at that day; and therefore saith, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

In which words you may easily take notice of two things: your Saviour's will and command, that your hearts be never overcharged with "surfeiting" or "drunkenness," or the "cares of this life;" and the reason of it; "lest that day come upon you unawares." The command is expressed by way of caution, the better to imprint and enforce it upon our minds. He doth not say only, "Let not your hearts be overcharged;" but, "Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting or drunkenness;" whereby He hath signified his pleasure to you, that He would have you take special care of this above all things, that whatsoever ye do, ye be sure never to eat or drink too much, never so much as to be overcharged with it.

But for our better understanding of this command, we must call to mind that general rule necessary to be observed in the interpretation of all God's laws, that we may rightly apprehend the whole sense and scope of them, and that is this; that whatsoever sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is likewise commanded; and whatsoever duty is com-



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manded, the contrary sin is likewise forbidden. As in the second commandment, where you are forbidden to worship or bow down to images, you are thereby commanded to worship and bow down to God. In the third ye are forbidden to take the Name of God in vain, and therefore commanded to sanctify it. In the fifth you are commanded to honour your parents, and therefore forbidden to despise or slight them. In the eighth you are forbidden to steal any thing from your neighbours, and therefore commanded to pay what ye owe unto them: and so of the rest. According to which rule, Our Saviour here forbidding you to be overcharged with “surfeiting” or “drunkenness,” or the “cares of this life,” thereby commands you to be always temperate. And, therefore, to understand His will aright, we must first consider the nature of temperance, as it is one of the four cardinal virtues, upon which the exercise of all other virtues doth in a great measure depend. For as no man can exercise any virtue aright, that is not so prudent as to know what he ought to do, so just as to be willing to do it according to his knowledge, and so valiant and courageous as to press through all difficulties for the doing of it; so neither can any one be virtuous in any thing, that is not temperate in all things: as you will acknowledge, when ye once know what it is to be so. Which that you may, I shall deduce the nature of true temperance from its first principles and grounds, and set it in such a light before you, that you may all clearly see into it.

For which purpose, therefore, we must first consider, that although our souls be of an heavenly and spiritual nature, yet our bodies were all made of earth, and are indeed nothing else but plain lumps of earth diversely tempered and modified. For it is written, “The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground.” He took so much dust or earth as would suffice to make a body of such a size as He designed man’s should be. This he ordered and tempered so by his almighty word, that some of it should be such as we call flesh, some bones, some brains, some lungs, some heart, some veins, some arteries, some blood, some nerves, and so for all the parts of the body: these He puts together, each in the proper place he had designed it for, and so it became

an human body, composed all of earth, but so as to be a fit vehicle for a rational and immaterial soul to reside in, which He therefore immediately joined to it : for he had no sooner formed this body of man of the dust of the earth, but “ He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living soul,” as it follows in the text now mentioned.

And as the first human body was thus made up altogether of earth, so all others being propagated from that, must needs consist of the same materials, even nothing else but earth. And as our bodies are composed, so they are upheld and nourished only of the earth. For our Maker hath so ordered it, that our bodies are increased till they come to their full growth, and afterwards preserved by putting several sorts of earth into our mouths, which being carried down into our stomachs, are there digested, so that the chyle or juice that is proper for nourishment, being separated from the grosser parts, it is wonderfully conveyed by little pipes or channels round about the body into every, even the least part of it ; and where it meets with any thing ready to decay, there some of it stays to prop it up, and so keeps the whole both in motion and life.

But all this, I say, is done only by several sorts of earth : for every thing we thus eat or put into our mouths, still comes out of the earth, either immediately as herbs, and roots, and plants, or else mediately as fruits and flesh. For although the fruit doth not come directly out of the earth, but from the tree, yet the tree doth so that produceth it. And although the flesh we eat doth not come immediately from it, yet the fowl or cattle whose flesh it is are fed of that which groweth upon the earth. And the very fish too, although they live in the water, they are nourished by some earthy matter they find there, or by the earthy part of the water itself. And so whatsoever it is we eat, howsoever it is digested, ordered, and made fit for our use, it comes originally out of the earth, otherwise it could not nourish us. For nothing can be nourished but by something of its own nature : and therefore our bodies being all earth, all our nourishment must needs be so too ; whatsoever shape or figure it is in, whatsoever virtue or quality it is of, whether

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it be hot or cold, hard or soft, dry or liquid, it is all but earth still. The very liquors we drink come out of the earth, or else are part of it, as all water is. That which is rained down from heaven, is first exhaled and taken up from the earth, and hath no other nourishment in it of itself, but from the earthy particles that are in it. And thus, as we were made of earth, and must return to it, so all the while we live upon it, we live also of it.

This we all find by daily experience, although there be but few that ever mind it; we every day eat and drink, and so commit earth to earth, and take no further notice of it, nor regard what becomes of it, or whither it goes; and yet by this means God supports us in our being, and prolongs our life so long as He sees good. Not but that He could do it, if He pleased, without such means now, as well as He will when we come to Heaven. But whilst we are upon earth, these are the means which He hath appointed for it, which therefore we are bound to use, and trust on Him for His blessing upon them, without which they can never do it: for “Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live.” It is God’s word and blessing upon what we eat, that makes it effectual to the preservation of our lives: and therefore we ought always to acknowledge Him to be our continual Preserver, that it is “in Him we live, and move, and have our being,” and trust on Him, and Him alone for it, in the use of these means that He hath ordained for that purpose; which, as I have shewn, is only eating and drinking such things as He for that end hath created, and continually produceth out of the earth, upon which we at present live.

Deut. 8. 3.  
Matt. 4. 4.

[Acts 17.  
28.]

But here we must further observe, that these being the means which God hath appointed for the preservation of our bodies in health and life, He hath so ordered it, that the use of them is pleasant to us, not only from that natural instinct which He hath put into us of self-preservation, which makes us pleased with every thing that tends towards it, but likewise because He hath formed our bodies, and particularly those parts which are exercised in the use of these means, so that they are delighted and pleased with

the very using of them; the food we eat tickling our senses whilst we eat it, and refreshing our bodies afterwards, so as to make us more cheerful and pleasant than we were before: which kind of pleasure being so natural to us, that we cannot choose but find it whether we will or no, it cannot therefore be sinful or unlawful in itself; neither hath God ever forbidden, but rather allowed it, in that He hath made it so natural, and in a manner necessary to us, that we cannot possibly avoid being pleased with eating when we are hungry, and drinking when we are thirsty; and so with the use of these means that He hath given us for our support, when we stand in need of them; I say, when we stand in need of them: for if there be no use or necessity of them, there can be no pleasure in them; as the wise man observes, “The full soul loatheth an honeycomb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.” Prov. 27. 7.

This, therefore, is the great fault that men are apt to be guilty of, even to eat or drink more than they have occasion for, more than their nature requires, or perhaps can well bear; for, following their appetites too far, they run into excess, taking more of these earthy creatures down into their bodies than they need, and, by consequence, more than can do them any good; and what doth them no good must needs do them hurt, and be prejudicial to their bodies as well as souls.

Herein therefore it is that the true nature of temperance consisteth, even in moderating our desires of meat and drink, so as to keep them within their bounds, that they be not excessive or inordinate either as to the quality or quantity of either of them; that every one proportion the quality of his food to the estate which God hath given wherewith to provide it; and the quantity of it to the temper and constitution that God hath made his body of. All men's bodies are not of the same size, nor of the same complexion, nor disposition; some are hot, and others cold; some dry, and others moist; some strong, others weak; and so some require more, others less meat and drink to supply their defects, and to keep them in a good temper: and therefore every one should take notice of his own constitution, and make such observations upon it as may direct him how to



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adjust his diet as exactly as he can to it, so as never to eat or drink more than what he finds by experience his body requires to preserve it in health and vigour, fit for the service of God, and for the duties of his particular calling; never so much as to overcharge himself, as our Saviour here expresseth it by a metaphor taken from a ship, which if it be overburdened, is in danger of sinking, or at least will lag and sail heavily; but if its freight be proportionate to its bulk, then all is well with it: and so it is with him that never overloads his body with meat or drink, or puts any more into it than what it can easily manage and digest into good nourishment, so as to be as fit for business after, as he was before. And how much, or how little soever such a one eats, he is properly a temperate and sober man. For this is that virtue which is called "temperance," as in other writings, so in the Holy Scriptures themselves, where we

2 Pet. 1. 6.

are commanded to "add to our knowledge, temperance;" as without which all our knowledge will signify but little; for we shall not be able to make a right use of it: whereas with it, the more we know, the better we shall be: for we shall be always ready to improve our knowledge to our own good.

And here I might begin to recommend this excellent virtue to your practice, but that I fear that when I have begun, I shall scarce know where to make an end; for it is of infinite use through the whole course of our lives, and is not only a single virtue of itself, but is indeed the virtue of all virtues; that without which no virtue can be exercised, nor duty performed as it ought to be.

If you look no further than this life, temperance contributes the most of any thing towards the greatest blessing that is in it, even to the health of your bodies: for, no more being ever put into them than what there is really need of and occasion for, every part is able to perform its office, and all concur in carrying the nutriment about to support, strengthen, and invigorate the whole, without leaving any such superfluous humours any where behind, out of which diseases are usually engendered. By which means your bodies will be always kept in good plight, and your senses quick and sprightly, so as to be duly affected with their respective objects. Yea, by this means you will be con-

stantly supplied also with an excellent breed of animal spirits for your souls to make use of in their operations; and so your heads will be always serene, your hearts cheerful, your understandings clear, your judgments sound, your memory strong, your consciences watchful, and all your passions regular and orderly. For all the organs and instruments which the soul, so long as it is united to the body, is forced to use, being always kept in a due frame and temper, the soul is able freely to exert itself, and to exercise all its powers and faculties aright. And hence it is that temperance is so great an enemy to vice, and so great a friend to all manner of virtue and goodness. It is the foundation of prudence, the director of justice, the safeguard of chastity, the preserver of modesty, the parent of meekness and humility, the nourisher of peace and concord, love and charity among neighbours. And as for all sorts of business, it is by temperance that they are either well begun, carried on, or finished. By this you are always able to contrive, and project, and manage your secular affairs to the best advantage. By this you are always fit to discourse and converse with men upon any subject. By this you are always disposed to perform the duties which you owe to Almighty God. By this ye may read or hear God's holy word with due attention, pray without distraction, and receive the blessed Sacrament with that presence and composure of mind which is necessary to so great a work.

All this temperance doth in a great measure of itself, of its own nature, much more when it is accompanied and assisted with the grace and blessing of God, as it usually is; for it being one of the "fruits of the Spirit," the said Holy Spirit is always ready to bless and sanctify it to the great ends before-mentioned: and therefore, as ever you desire to attain those ends, ye must be sure to use this means. You must not clog and overcharge your bodies with meat or drink, but keep them always clean, and fit to be the temples of the Holy Ghost, that he may delight to dwell in you, and direct and assist you in the exercise of all true grace and virtue, and in the performance of all such good works as are required of all those that are the heirs of Salvation, as I dare say you all desire to be; but can never attain your

Gal. 5. 23.

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desires without temperance, that being the first thing necessary in order to it. This reason teaches; this the very light of nature discovers, as we may see in those that contended for the victory in any of the Olympic games, of whom the Apostle observes, that every one who strove for the victory, “was temperate in all things.” But then he adds, “they did it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible;” as if he had said, ‘They that strove only for a fading crown of laurel, dieted themselves, and kept their bodies always in a right temper for it; how much more should we do so, who strive for the incorruptible and eternal crown of glory!’

1 Cor. 9.25.

But these things are so plain and obvious, that I need not insist any longer upon them, especially before such as have already experienced the truth of them; and they are the only competent witnesses in this case: for having been accustomed to it, they know, they feel, they taste, the sweet fruits of temperance, and can tell you, that all which I have said of it is nothing in comparison of what there is really in it. Whereas others, who know not what it is, may think I have said too much, and therefore I shall speak no more to them of temperance, but of the contrary vices of gluttony and drunkenness, which they so much admire, but God abhors and hates as the most loathsome and detestable sins that mankind can be guilty of: insomuch that He judges those who are guilty of them, not to be fit to live; at least, if notwithstanding the advice and correction which their parents have given them for it, they will still continue in them; as appears from that severe law enacted by God Himself for His Own people, that if parents have a stubborn and rebellious son, they shall bring him to the elders of the city, and if they can truly say to the elders, “This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard: then all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die.” Whether this law was ever executed we do not find, but we are sure it was the mind of the Lawgiver; and that sufficiently declares His abhorrence of these vices, which therefore were generally so abhorred by the Jews themselves, that they could not find out a more ignominious name for our blessed Saviour, than to call Him,

Deut. 21.  
20, 21.

“a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber.” And the wise man Matt. 11. 19. advises all to avoid not only these vices themselves, but the company of such as are addicted to them; “Be not,” saith Prov. 23. 20. he, “among wine-bibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh;” and then he adds, “For the glutton and the drunkard shall ver. 21. come to poverty;” as we frequently see they do; God justly punishing their excess with the want of necessities.

But here we may observe, that as these two vices usually go together in practice, so they are both forbidden and condemned together by Almighty God in the places before-mentioned; and so they are by our Saviour in my text, saying, “Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.” For here by surfeiting we are to understand that which is otherwise called “gluttony,” whereby men eat so much as to surfeit themselves, and by that means either shorten their own lives, or make them insignificant and useless in the world. And herein it is that both the nature and the greatness of this sin appeareth: God hath given you the use of His creatures to support, and you abuse them to destroy your lives; either immediately, as it often happens upon surfeits, or at least insensibly and by degrees, most of those distempers which men are incident to, being contracted this way. For by eating more than your stomachs can digest, and turn into good nourishment, there must needs be many superfluous, crude, and noxious humours ingendered in your bodies, which getting by degrees unto an head, break out at length into some grievous, if not mortal distemper. Hence comes the gout, the scurvy, the stone, the palsy, the cholic, the fever, and many other, both acute and chronical diseases, which afflict men while they live, and at last bring them to their end. And therefore all who thus indulge their appetites to excess, are plainly accessory to their own death; and so do not only offend God, but destroy themselves; or rather, they offend him by destroying themselves with those things which He designed for their preservation: and upon them is verified that of the Psalmist, “Their table is become Ps. 69. 22. a snare to them, and that which should have been for their welfare, is made a trap.”

And what if you feel not these sad effects of gluttony as



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yet? It is not long but you will certainly do it: and in the meanwhile ye cannot but find by your own experience, that you make your lives, at least for some time, as useless and unserviceable to God and the world, as if ye were already dead. For when your hearts are overcharged with surfeiting and gluttony, are not your heads heavy? your brains stupid? and your whole body restless and uneasy? And what then can you be fit to do? Nothing certainly, except it be to sin: that, I confess, you are now prepared for, and ready every moment to fall into, into any sin, to which either the Devil, the world, or the flesh can tempt you: gluttony exposing the soul to as many vices, as it doth the body to diseases. But as for any service which you owe to God, that ye can have no mind to; or if ye had, you are altogether unfit for it.

And yet how many are there amongst us who allow themselves in this mischievous and destructive sin, to the great scandal and reproach of our holy religion; and so there were in the very beginning of Christianity, which made the Apostle complain, and say to the Philippians, "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly." Oh, that we had no ground to take up the same complaint now! But alas, we cannot but be all sensible that there is too much occasion for it; there being too many amongst us who mind little or nothing else, but how "to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." As if they had nothing else to do, but only to undo themselves, both soul and body.

[Rom. 13.  
14.]

But I hope better things of you, such as accompany Salvation, which I am sure, this doth not. Howsoever, let me beg of you never to give way to this sin. God hath given most of you all things richly to enjoy, at least enough both to sustain and refresh you; and you may and ought to make use of what He hath given you for those ends, and thank Him that gives it: "for every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." But, as the creatures of God are all good in themselves, take care to make them so to you, by using them so as not

1 Tim. 4. 4.

to abuse them. Remember your Saviour's words, "Take heed that your hearts be never overcharged with surfeiting or gluttony:" and for that purpose look upon all these sensual pleasures, not as they come, but as they go away, and leave a sting behind them. Remember him in the Gospel, who fared sumptuously every day he lived, but afterwards had not a drop of water to cool his tongue. Above all things, endeavour all ye can to abstract your minds from all things here below, and enure yourselves to those manly, those pure, those spiritual pleasures, which are offered to you in the Gospel of Christ; where God hath provided for you a feast of fat things indeed, which will fill and satiate, but can never surfeit you. Let others therefore go and feed with swine upon husks and dirt, let us go and feed upon Angels' food, upon the bread of life, upon the body and blood of Christ, which will preserve and nourish both our souls and bodies to eternal life. [Luke 16.  
19, 24.]

But here you must further observe, that our blessed Saviour expressly chargeth you to have a care of drunkenness as well as surfeiting; which both shews it to be a sin, and makes it so. For as, whatsoever He commands, it is our duty to perform it, because He commands it; so whatsoever He forbids, it is a sin to do that, because He forbids it. And therefore, if God had never revealed His will any where else, as He hath done in several places, concerning this point, these words of our Saviour oblige all men to avoid both surfeiting and drunkenness: but in a more especial manner they oblige all Christians, as being the words of Christ Himself, in Whom they believe, and from Whom they expect Salvation. And therefore, that drunkenness as well as surfeiting is a sin, I need not prove; that appearing sufficiently from my text itself. But my business must be to shew how great a sin this is. It is true, all sins are great, as being committed against that Great and Almighty Being that governs the world: but this is a sin of more than ordinary size; it is a sin of the first magnitude, one of the greatest that mankind can be guilty of, as you will soon acknowledge when you once understand the nature of it.

For which purpose we must call to mind what I observed before; that as God made, so He maintains us out of the

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earth, having appointed and empowered several parts of it to nourish and preserve us in health and life, so long as He sees good. And as the dust of the ground, out of which God made man, was not perfectly dry, but had some moisture in it, out of which He formed the blood, and the whole radical moisture of the body; so our bodies are still preserved, not by mere dry earth, but by some kinds of earth moistened or mixed with water, which He therefore created together with it, as part of the globe of the earth, and caused it to circulate so, as to run not only upon the surface, but likewise within the bowels of the earth, as our blood circulates through all the parts of our body. By which means, as all the parts of the earth, especially those which are designed for nourishment, are moistened, so that moisture passing through several sorts of earth, is turned into several sorts of liquors, according to the quality of that earth through which they pass. And hence it is, that besides plain water, which is the only drink of the greatest part of mankind, there are some liquors of so subtil and spirituous a nature, that they do not only moisten the body, but actuate and quicken it, and being taken in too great a quantity, inflame and overpower the animal spirits that are in it.

Hence, therefore, it being necessary to use some kind of liquors to moisten what we eat, and so to make it fit for nourishment; hence, I say, it cannot but be lawful to use either water itself, or any sort of liquor that will serve for that purpose; as the mixture of corn with water, which we call beer or ale, or else the juices of several sorts of fruits or plants, and particularly the vine, which God hath fitted and designed both to nourish and refresh us; as David observeth, where he saith, that God made “grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the use of man, that he might bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make him a cheerful countenance, and bread which strengtheneth man’s heart:” where, as he plainly asserts all our food to come out of the earth, as I observed, so he saith particularly of wine, that it maketh glad the heart of man; which it would not do had not God designed it for that end. And to use it for that end for which He designed it, cannot be unlawful: and therefore we find our

blessed Saviour Himself did not only use it, but when He John 2.1-11. was at a feast where they wanted it, He exerted His infinite power in turning water into wine, which certainly He would never have done, if it was not lawful to drink it, and to drink too as they do at a marriage-feast, to cheer and refresh their spirits.

But wherein then lies the sin? Not in using, but in abusing the creatures that God hath made for our use; not in drinking, but in drinking too much, in drinking to excess, more than your bodies require, or your heads and hearts can bear; as our Saviour Himself here explains it, requiring you, that your hearts be not overcharged with drunkenness; whereby He plainly shews wherein the sinfulness of it consisteth, even in the heart's being overcharged with drinking; when, instead of being refreshed, you are depressed, as the word signifies, and borne down with it, being made more dull and heavy, or any way disturbed or discomposed in your minds, and so more unfit for business than you were before.

And to the same purpose St. Paul chargeth the Ephesians, saying, "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess." Eph. 5. 18. He doth not forbid them to drink it, but to drink it to excess: it is the excess that is the sin. It is that and only that which he in the name of God forbids; all manner of excess, not only in the highest, but even to the least degree, when men drink never so little more than what will do them good. What will do them good is allowed to all; and therefore St. Paul himself said to Timothy, "Drink no 1 Tim. 5. 23. longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." He bids him drink wine, but it must be but little: he bids him drink a little, not to overcharge his heart, but to comfort his stomach, and help the infirmities, which his drinking nothing but water before, had made him subject to. In short, he allows him to drink so much wine with his water or without it, as will do him good, and no more. And so long as men keep themselves within these bounds, they do no more than what they lawfully may, and in some cases ought to do, especially when they are directed to it by an honest and able physician.



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But the mischief is, that men are apt to go beyond these bounds, to drink wine and strong liquors, not only so much as will do them good, but so much as to hurt themselves; and this is that which God forbids, Who in all His commandments designs our good, and in this particularly, commanding us to abstain from excessive drinking, because it is prejudicial and hurtful to us: and so it is in many respects. I shall instance in some few, which will sufficiently demonstrate that drunkenness, or excessive drinking of any sort of liquors, is one of the most mischievous and destructive vices that mankind can be guilty of, and that they who are guilty of it are the very worst of men.

For, *first*, if there was no more in it, but the loss of so much time as such people spend upon their debaucheries, this one would think is enough to deter any considering man from it. Men are apt to complain that their time is short, and yet they will make it shorter by throwing so much of it away, as they commonly do, to no other purpose but to make themselves and others drunk; spending whole hours together, and sometimes whole days in nothing else. But is this to redeem your time, or rather is it not to sell it? To sell it to the Devil himself for nothing, for worse than nothing, for sin and wickedness. What a sad account shall such men have to give of their time at the end of it! How can such men plead they had not time to pray, nor time to read or hear God's Word, nor time to examine themselves, nor time to prepare themselves for the Holy Sacrament, when they could find so much time to drink and be drunken? What can such men expect, but that the curse of God will light upon them? They may well expect it, for God Himself hath said it shall; yea, He hath cursed them already, saying, "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!" where He plainly makes their spending of so much time in drinking to be a great aggravation of their sin; itself also being a great sin, whether they be drunk or no. Some men, ye know, can sit long at it, and not be overtaken with it; and they are apt to glory in their strength, to triumph over others, and flatter themselves with the thoughts that they

are no way guilty. But hear, O vain man, what God saith, “Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink!” He doth not only denounce His woe against those who are drunk, but likewise against such as are strong to drink, whether they be drunk or no. And therefore thou hast little cause to boast of such strength, but rather to be grieved and troubled at it, seeing the curse of God is entailed upon it. For which, among many others, one reason is, because such men, who by reason of custom, or by the natural temper of their bodies, are able to drink much, without being overcome with it; such men, I say, are apt to consume a great part of their time this way, and to make others do so too. And so be sure all do, who are given to this vice, and therefore have just cause to hate it, as robbing them of one of the best jewels they have, even their time. And so it doth of that which they in their folly account better, even their estates too; as many have found by woful experience, who having been born to considerable fortunes, yet by living in this sin, have died beggars. There are too many instances to be seen of this every day; nothing being more usual than for men in this age to follow Esau’s example in selling their very birthright, though not for a mess of pottage, as he did, yet for that which is less worth, even for drink which they have no need of; and then find, when it is too late, the truth of that wise saying, that “the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty.” *Prov. 23.21.* And it is well if they impoverish only themselves by it: for it is no great matter whether such persons have any estate or no, unless they would make better use of it. But, alas! they ruin their families too, and entail poverty upon their posterity for many generations; so that their children, and children’s children, feel the sad effects of their excessive drinking many years after.

Neither do they consume only their own estates, but God’s creatures to no purpose, or rather a very ill one; abusing that to their own hurt, that would do a great many other people good. How many poor families might be maintained out of that which others spend in excessive eating and drinking! Yea, that very drink which some take excessively when they have no need of it, how many of those

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who have need of it, might be refreshed and supported by it! What is, if this be not, to embezzle the talents that God hath put into your hands, and to squander them away, so as that nobody else shall be the better, and you yourselves the worse for them?

Prov. 23. 29,  
30.

Eccles. 31.  
30.

I say, you yourselves the worse for them; for so verily you are for every cup you take too much. For in that it is too much, it is plainly more than will do you good; and what is not good, must needs be bad for you, both as to your souls and bodies. Your bodies suffer more than you are aware of by it; by it your strength is impaired, your natural heat abated, your stomachs overcharged, your brains disordered, your blood inflamed, and your whole bodies over-spread with the seeds of all manner of distempers. “Who hath woe?” saith the wise man, “Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.” And as we read in Ecclesiasticus, “Drunkenness increaseth the rage of a fool till he offend; it diminisheth strength, and maketh wounds.” The same is found true by daily experience. Look upon a man in drink! what an hideous creature is he now become! More like a brute than man. His colour is changed, his eyes stare, his tongue falters, his head and his hand shake, his breath is short, his knees weak, so that he staggers to and fro, and at length perhaps falls down into a kennel, the fittest place for such brutes to lie in. Insomuch that the very sight of a drunken man is enough to make all men abhor and loathe the very thoughts of being drunken. And yet this is nothing in comparison of what they must needs feel inwardly. For if you look into their inward parts, you might there see their stomachs are sick, their lungs pant, their hearts beat, their heads ache, their blood ferments and boils, and at length breaks forth into a fever, or some other mortal distemper, which usually shortens their days, and puts an end to their miserable life by a more miserable death; which follows so naturally upon excessive drinking, that it is almost a miracle that any common drunkards live out half their days. And if any of them do happen to hold out to the usual age of

men, it must be imputed unto God, either to His mercy waiting for their repentance, which is very rare : or else to His justice, continuing them longer in this world, to punish them the more severely in the next ; which He hath given them sufficient warning of, by making this sin itself in some measure its own punishment ; and so beginning to punish them for it, so soon as ever they have committed it ; as they always experience, and sometimes have confessed, being forced to do so by the pains and diseases their bodies are afterwards tormented with. And it would be well for them if it went no farther : but drunkenness disorders the soul as much as it doth the body ; or rather disordering the body, it disorders the soul too. For the soul, whilst it is united to the body, making use of the animal spirits that are in it, as its instruments whereby it performs its several operations ; when they are out of tune, the soul can do nothing as it ought, no more than an artificer can work without tools, or such as are not fit for his purpose. But excessive drinking causeth such fumes and vapours in the stomach, which flying up into the brain, where the animal spirits chiefly reside, put them all out of order, either scattering them out of their places, or overpowering them so as to make them stupid and unactive, no way fit for the soul to make use of. Hence, some by drinking to excess, are deprived of all sense and reason, as if they had no souls at all, but were mere stocks, fit for nothing but to be cast into the fire and burnt, as they will be ere long. And though it doth not go so far, but they have still something like reason left them, yet it serves them to very little purpose. They cannot think a wise thought, understand nothing clearly, nor judge of any thing aright. Their imaginations are disturbed, their consciences stupified, and their passions all in a hurry, all irregular and extravagant ; so that at present they are in a kind of delirium or frenzy, not knowing what they say, or what they do, or what is done to them ; as the wise man excellently describes it, where forewarning men of drunkenness, he saith by that, “ Thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. Prov. 23.34, 35. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick ; they have beaten me, and I felt it not : When shall I awake ?



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I will seek it yet again." And although this delirium continues in its height only while the liquor is working in their brains, yet their brains are thereby so clouded, their understanding so darkened, and all their faculties so discomposed, that they are never wise when sober, as the wise man observes, saying, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby, is not wise;" or, as the word in the original signifies, "shall not be wise;" so that as no wise man will be ever drunk, so no drunkard is ever a wise man.

Prov. 20. 1.

By this, therefore, we may see into the reason which our Saviour here gives wherefore He would not have your hearts overcharged with drunkenness, even "lest that day," the great day of judgment, "come upon you unawares." Your eternal state depending upon the issue of the proceedings upon that day, He often cautions you to prepare yourselves, and have your accounts ready against that time, whensoever it shall happen. And here in a more particular manner He adviseth you to have a care of drunkenness, as that which will make you put the evil day far from you, till at length it come unawares upon you, and surprise you when you do not so much as think of it, much less can be ready and prepared for it. For when your hearts are overcharged with drunkenness, it is impossible you should be fit to do that which is the greatest work you have to do; for indeed you can do nothing at all, not the least thing that is, as ye ought to do it. You cannot pray or meditate upon God; you cannot exercise any repentance or faith in Christ. But why do I speak of such things, which a drunkard is no more able to do than a brute beast is. He cannot so much as mind his particular calling, nor do any worldly business without spoiling it: all that he is fit for is to sin, and that, I confess, he is always fit for. Fit for it, did I say? Yea, he is desperately bent upon it, impetuously inclined to sin; to all sin, one as well as another: to lust, fury and revenge; to swearing, cursing, lying, brawling, fighting, murder, any thing that comes in his way. There is no sin but some have committed it in their drink; and if there be any that a drunken man doth not commit, it is not because he would not, but because he could not. He had not an opportunity;

otherwise he would have committed that as well as any other. For a man in such a condition hath no sense of the difference betwixt good and evil; for "wine," as the prophet Hos. 4. 11. speaks, "hath taken away his heart." His reason, his understanding, his conscience is gone; and therefore all sins are alike to him. Hence it is that this sin never goes alone, but hath a great train of other sins always following it: insomuch that it cannot so properly be called one single sin, as all sins in one.

Wherefore, as ever ye desire to avoid any sin at all, ye must be sure to avoid drunkenness, which will so expose you to all manner of sin, that you can never be secure from falling into any whatsoever. And as you must avoid the sin itself, so likewise all that are addicted to it. It is not mine, but the wise man's counsel, "Be not among wine-bibbers." And St. Paul commands, "If any one be a drunkard, with such an one not to eat." Prov. 23. 20. 1 Cor. 5. 11. It is not enough that you be not drunk with them, but you must not so much as drink with them, nor eat with them, nor keep them company any more than ye needs must; and that both for their sakes and your own: for their sakes, that so they may be ashamed of themselves and of their sin, when they see all sober men abhor and shun them like so many wild-beasts: and for your own sake, lest you by degrees learn it of them, and become like to them, the worst sort of cattle upon the face of the earth, that only cumber the ground, doing good to none, and worst of all to themselves who live like brutes; and it would be well for them if they could die so too, so as never to live again. But that cannot be; live again they must, and that for ever; but where? In Heaven? No surely, they can never come thither. For God hath expressly decreed, that "no drunkard shall ever inherit the kingdom of Heaven." 1 Cor. 6. 10. Gal. 5. 21. Indeed, what should they do there? There is neither wine nor strong drink to be had; and therefore Heaven would seem a sad place to them. But they need not fear being sent thither; they have God's word for it, that they shall not, and therefore they may believe it.

But where then must they live? In a place more fit and proper for them, even in hell; where they will meet with

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their old companions again, not to be merry, but to weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth together; where they shall have drink enough, but it shall be only fire and brimstone; where they shall be drunk continually, but it shall be with nothing else but the fury and vengeance of Almighty God: where, for the many hogsheads of good liquor they consumed upon earth, they shall not have so much as one drop of water to cool their inflamed tongues; where all their drunken bouts will return upon them, and afflict and torment them over again. In short, where “the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” This shall be the potion of their cup to drink in the other world, who give themselves up to drunkenness in this.

Now put these things together; how that drunkenness consumes a great part of that little time that God hath allotted you upon earth: it wastes your estates, and reduceth both yourselves and families into extreme poverty, or at least into great danger of it: it abuseth those good creatures to your own damage, which God hath given for your benefit and advantage: it impairs the health of your bodies, and breeds all manner of diseases in them: it blots out the image of God that was enstamped upon you, and makes you like to the beasts which perish: it deprives you of your reason, or at least of the right use and exercise of it: it exposeth you to all sorts of vice and wickedness that mankind is capable of committing: it maketh you unfit for all lawful and necessary employments, whether sacred or civil: and at last throws you down into the bottomless pit, there to live with the Devil and his fiends for ever. Put, I say, these things together, and then judge ye whether it be not the height of folly and madness for any man to allow himself in such a sin as this? Whether they, who have been hitherto addicted to it, had not best to leave it off, and all others to take heed of ever falling into it, as they tender their own good and welfare.

I am loth to suppose there are any here present of the first sort, who have hitherto indulged this great sin; God grant there be not: but if there be, as I fear there are, give me leave, in the Name of the Most High God, to speak a few words to you. I confess I have no great hopes of

doing good upon you ; it being very rare for any who have been accustomed to this sin ever to repent of it, till it be too late ; and one of the usual effects of it is to harden men against reproof, and to blind their eyes, so as that they cannot see the things belonging to their peace, before they are hid from them. And therefore I have little reason to expect that you will hearken to what I say, but rather despise and scorn it. Howsoever, I desire you to consider that I speak not in mine own name, but in His that made and redeemed you, and beseech you for His sake, as well as for your own, that you would lay aside your prejudices for awhile, judge impartially of what you have now heard, and then bethink yourselves in good earnest, whether it be not your wisdom and your interest, as well as duty, to break off this sinful custom by a speedy and sincere repentance. I am confident you cannot but acknowledge it ; and therefore be advised to do it, without any more ado. You cannot but be all sensible that it is a sin, a great and mischievous sin, and therefore make no apology for it, as that drinking increaseth your acquaintance, gratifies your customers, promotes your trades, that it keeps you from being melancholy, by making you forget your troubles, or that the temper of your bodies require it, and custom hath made it so natural to you, that you cannot leave it, if you would. These are but vain excuses, and so they will appear at the last day ; yea, they appear to be so already to all sober men, and to yourselves too, when sober, if ye be ever so. For how can such acquaintance be worth getting, or such customers be worth keeping, which consume your time, your estates, and health ? What will it avail you to promote your trade, when by that you lose your souls ? And as for melancholy, is it not better to be so than mad ? And to remember your troubles, so as to prevent or remove them, rather than by forgetting to hasten and increase them ? And how can you imagine that the temper of any man's body should force him to destroy his soul ? Or that a man may not break an ill custom as well as take it up, if he will ? I say, if he will ; that is all : be but willing, and the work is done. But that ye may be sure to be so, ye must give up yourselves to fasting



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[Rom. 8.  
13.]

and prayer : to fasting, that so you may testify your sorrow for your former intemperance, by your future abstinence ; and to prayer, that you may obtain the “ Spirit of God to mortify the deeds of the flesh.” To which you must add your constant endeavours to avoid all your drunken companions ; your steadfast resolutions, by the grace of God, to keep yourselves for the future within the bounds of temperance and sobriety ; and frequent meditations upon the dismal effects of drinking to excess. By these and such-like means you may as easily conquer this sin, as you was ever conquered by it. But if you will not use them, I shall say no more to you, but you will one day wish you had.

But as for others, who have hitherto, by God’s blessing, been kept from this sin, if you be ancient, you cannot but have found so much benefit by temperance, that ye need no arguments to persuade you to it. If ye be young, I must advise you, as ever you desire to be old, or wise, or good, or happy in this world or the next, above all things take heed of drunkenness : you live in the midst of a wicked and naughty world, where you will meet with many temptations to all sin, and particularly to this. Have a care of yourselves. If ye know of any that are given to drinking, never keep them company, lest ye be infected. If any one entice you to drink excessively, account him your mortal enemy, employed by the Devil to ruin and destroy you. If any one offer you but one cup too much, look upon it as poison ; for so it is both to your souls and bodies. Wheresoever you are, whatsoever ye do, avoid all occasions of drinking to excess, lest you have cause to repent of it when it is too late, or which is worse, never repent at all.

In short, let me beseech you all to carry these words of our blessed Saviour always in your minds ; “ Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, or the cares of this life, and so the day of judgment come upon you unawares.” And as you profess yourselves to be Christians, act accordingly. Keep yourselves as much as may be always in an even frame and temper, that your bodies be never over-burdened

with meat or drink, nor your minds with worldly cares ; but always live so as to be always ready to die ; that whensoever God shall call for you, you may appear with comfort before Him, and enjoy those pleasures which are at His [Ps. 16. 11.] right hand for evermore, by the Merits and Mediation of our ever blessed Saviour : “ To Whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honour, praise and glory both now and for ever.”

## SERMON CXXXVI.

PROFESSION USELESS WITHOUT PRACTICE.

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MATTHEW, vii. 21.

*Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven.*

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SEEING the Son of God was pleased to come from Heaven to earth, on purpose that the sons of men might go from earth to Heaven; as ever we desire to come thither, we must be sure to take special notice of whatsoever He hath said concerning the way and means whereby we may arrive there; and, indeed, of whatsoever He hath said that any ways concerns it: for, seeing the great end of His conversing so long with men, was to shew and direct them the way to eternal bliss, questionless, whatsoever He said concerning it is of absolute necessity to be observed by us.

Now there are two things in this chapter, which our blessed Saviour acquaints us with concerning the way to Heaven. The first is, that it is a very narrow one, and, by consequence, that it is very hard both to hit upon it, and to walk in it; which He therefore tells us, that we may not think it is so easy a matter to get to Heaven as the world would have it. No; he would have us know, that as Heaven is the highest happiness that we can attain to, so it is the hardest matter in the world to attain unto it; the way thither being so exceeding narrow, that no man can possibly keep himself within its bounds and limits, without extraordinary care and circumspection: the allurements of the

world on the one side, and our own corrupt hearts on the other, being so apt to entice us from it; so that until we have gotten that conquest over our lusts, as to live above the world and ourselves too, it is impossible for us to walk directly towards Heaven: but this, we may all find, is no easy matter to do, by reason of our natural inclinations, to evil, and averseness from what is truly good; so that there is no sin can be subdued, no duty performed, no grace or virtue acted, without a great deal of care and pains about it. And, therefore, it must needs be very difficult indeed to do whatsoever is required of you, in order to your eternal Salvation; which none of you surely can now doubt of, seeing your Saviour Himself hath assured you of it; yet so, that He would not have any of you be discouraged from your endeavours after it, but rather excited and stirred up to a more diligent and serious prosecution of it. And therefore He advises you to “strive to enter in at the strait gate;” intimating, that though the gate be strait, yet if you do but strive, you may enter in; and that, though it be hard to get to Heaven, yet it is possible; and though there are not many, there are some few come thither. And therefore, why may not you be in the number of those few, as well as others? Never a one here, whether high or low, rich or poor, but is as capable of enjoying eternal happiness, as any one that doth already enjoy it; yea, and you are all invited, commanded, entreated, to walk in the narrow way, and enter in at the strait gate that leads to life: and, therefore, if any of you miss of it, you may thank yourselves. Christ’s arms are ready open to embrace you all that will but go unto Him; and though Heaven’s gate be strait, it is always open to such as make it their business to enter in; you need not fear St. Peter’s locking it against you, for both he, and all the Saints in Heaven, as well as Christ Himself, would rejoice to see you all crowding together in the narrow way, and striving which should press through the strait gate first: so that none of you can fail of everlasting glory, that are not failing to yourselves in the pursuit of it; which, methinks, should make us all resolve to set apart and devote the residue of our lives wholly to the “working out our salvation with fear and trembling,” and to the “making

[Matt. 16.  
19.]

[Phil. 2.  
12.]  
[2 Pet. 1.  
10.]



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[Matt. 7.  
14.]

our calling and election sure," so as to make it our great, and our only care and study in this world to prepare for a better, and to make sure of that eternal life which Christ Himself hath purchased for us with His Own most precious blood; yet so as that we must use the utmost of our endeavours too for our attainment of it. And, therefore, let me desire you again and again to remember and consider seriously with yourselves, that the same person Who died once that you might live for ever, hath told you in plain terms, that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it."

Now, our blessed Saviour having there taught us how hard it is to get to Heaven, in the words that I have now read He shews who shall, and who shall not come thither; "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven." The meaning of which words, in brief, is this, that the bare profession of the Christian religion, without the practice of what is required in it, will never bring a soul to Heaven.

But for our clearer understanding and better improvement of these words, we shall consider them in the same order wherein they were delivered by Christ Himself.

First, saith He, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven." As if He should have said, although I am come down from Heaven on purpose that by Me men might go thither, yet I would not have you think that your calling me, "Lord," and professing that religion which I teach to be the way to Heaven, will ever bring you thither: no, there is more to be done than so, before you can be made partakers of such transcendent happiness as that is.

And verily there is more in these words of our Saviour than at first sight there may seem to be; for they plainly intimate to us, that men may not only profess the Christian religion in general, but may make also a very considerable progress in the practice of what it requires, and yet for all that come short of Heaven. Which consideration, duly improved, will be of great use in our way to Heaven, both to direct and quicken us in it. For we are very apt to

mistake, if not the common road, yet some bye-path that leads to Hell, for the way to Heaven, merely because we see some walk in it, that make an outward show and profession of religion. Insomuch, that there was never any heresy so damnable, nor schism so dangerous, ever brewed in Hell, or broached on earth, but it hath been swallowed down by some or other only upon this account, because it hath been commended and presented to the world under the colour of piety and religion, whereof the broachers of it have been strict and zealous professors : whereas, was it but seriously considered, how like the Devil may look to an Angel of Light, and yet be still the Prince of Darkness ; and how great a show a man may make of religion in the world, and yet remain in the gall of bitterness ; was this, I say, but rightly considered, we should not suffer ourselves to be so cheated as generally we are, both by others and ourselves too ; often conceiting ourselves to be in the road to Heaven, when we are among the Antipodes to it ; and have no other ground for such a conceit, but only because we profess that religion which shews us the ready way thither.

This, therefore, being that which is the ruin and downfall of many amongst us, I shall do my endeavour at this time to prevent it, by shewing you, that the mere profession of the Gospel, how high and specious soever it be, will never bring a soul to Heaven, without the practice and performance of whatsoever is required by it ; or that a man may go a great way in the profession of the Christian religion, and yet be no real Christian, nor ever the better for it. Which being a matter of so great importance, I shall endeavour to handle it as clearly and distinctly as I can, that you may all know how far you may profess the name of Christ, and yet come short of Heaven ; and, by consequence, how far you must go in the Christian religion, if you desire to receive any benefit from it.

Now for the opening of this : First, I suppose that all here present are baptized into the Name of Christ, and by that means are initiated into the Christian religion : and I must confess also, that it was always the opinion of the primitive as well as it is of our Church, that Baptism, or “ the washing of regeneration,” doth so cleanse us from all sin, whether

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original or actual, that if a person die after Baptism, without the commission of any actual sin, he is undoubtedly saved by virtue of the blood of Christ sprinkled mystically on him. And hence it was, that in the primitive times, especially for the two or three first centuries after our Saviour's passion, it was very common for those who were converted from heathenism to Christianity, to defer their Baptism as long as ever they could, sometimes to the very day of their death, merely upon this opinion which they had conceived of it, that if they committed no actual sin after Baptism, they were sure to go to Heaven. And, questionless, there is a great deal more virtue in Baptism rightly administered, than people generally think of. But howsoever, you must not think that Baptism is all that the Christian religion requires of you; or that all that are baptized shall be saved, whether they repent and believe or no. By Baptism indeed you are admitted into the society of Christians, and are put into a capacity of obtaining pardon and Salvation by Him into Whose death ye are baptized. But if you look no further, you are never likely to attain it; for at the same time that our Saviour gave his Apostles their commission "to baptize all nations" that turned to His religion, He gave them order likewise to "teach them to observe whatsoever He had commanded them." And therefore, without observing the commands of Christ, our Baptism will avail us nothing; this is but our entrance into the Christian religion, and if we go no further, it is impossible we should come to "the end of it, even the eternal salvation of our souls," which thousands, I fear, that are baptized never arrive at.

Matt. 28. 19.  
20.

[1 Pet. 1.  
9.]

Nay, further, you may not only be baptized into the Name of Christ, but acknowledge Him too to be the Son of God, and the only Saviour of the world, and yet not be saved by Him; for the Devils themselves could not but acknowledge this, saying, "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God?" And yet, for all that, I suppose you will all grant that they were far enough from Heaven; and so may any of you be, for all your acknowledging and believing the same thing as they did. For though this be the true orthodox faith which you ought to live and die in, yet this is not all which the Gospel requires of you in order to your

Matt. 8. 29.

eternal happiness ; neither will it signify any thing to confess Christ with your mouth, unless you believe in Him, and obey Him with your heart.

And what though you go further still, and not only acknowledge him to be your Lord and Master, but frequently call upon, and pray unto Him under that notion? Yea, and with a great deal of zeal and fervency repeat it over and over again, saying, " Lord, Lord ;" will this bring you to the kingdom of Heaven? No, He Himself, Whom you call " Lord," hath told you in plain terms, " Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven." But you may say, that you do not only acknowledge Him to be your Lord, but testify this your acknowledgment by waiting upon Him to hear His Word, and to be acquainted with His will and pleasure. To that I answer, that it is very well you do so ; but I must tell you withal, that neither is this all you must do, if you desire to be saved. For you may bring your bodies before Him, and leave your hearts behind, according to that of the Prophet. Ezek.33.31. And what though you come really to hear the Word, unless you practise it, you know what the Apostle tells you, " Not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified." Rom. 2. 13. And our blessed Saviour Himself saith, " If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." John 13. 17. So that it is neither your hearing, nor yet your knowing the will of God can make you happy, unless you do it. And therefore do not you think that coming to church and hearing of sermons will ever bring you to Heaven, except you practise what you hear; without which the very sermons you hear will one day rise up in judgment against you, and instead of carrying you nearer to Heaven, will help to sink you lower into Hell. For, I suppose, you cannot hear so much as you do, but you must needs know what you ought to do: and your Saviour Himself assures you, that " the servant that knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes;" which when I seriously consider, I cannot but tremble at the thoughts of that sad account that some will have to give another day, who never think they can hear too much, nor do too little. And amongst ourselves, how many thousand sermons have



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some of you heard in your life ! What sin is there but you have sometimes heard it reproved ? What duty but hath oftentimes been pressed upon you ? And therefore what can you have to answer for yourselves, who live in the frequent commission of any one sin, or in the constant neglect of any one duty whatsoever ? Neither do you think that you do God any service at all by such hearing as this is : what cares He for your coming to His house, and making a shift, though it be something tedious, to hear a sermon out ? Is this an acceptable service unto God, or any way advantageous to yourselves ? Not at all, unless you therefore only hear that you may practise, and practise faithfully what you hear ; otherwise, profess what you please, and hear what you can, you will not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

[2 Cor. 12.  
15.]

Nay, you may go further still, and pretend much love to Christ, not only by praying often to Him, and hearing as often from Him, but also by speaking in His behalf, writing, yea, perhaps fighting for Him too, and yet neither truly love Him here, nor come unto Him hereafter : for all this is no more than what the Jews would do for Moses, or the Turks for Mahomet, or what the Papists do for the images which they worship and adore ; and have wrote ten times more in their behalf than ever they did for Christ. So may we “ spend and be spent ” for the Gospel, and use the utmost of our power for the defence and propagation of it, and yet receive no benefit from it, because we may do it upon the same grounds, and from the same principles, that the professors of all other religions strive to maintain and propagate the several religions which they do profess ; because it is the religion of our country, and that which our forefathers both lived and died in. But he that hath no better reasons than these are, to use his tongue, his pen, or strength for the Christian religion, is as far from the kingdom of Heaven as those who never yet heard of it.

Matt. 7. 22,  
23.

There is still another thing behind ; which, if seriously considered, would make our ears to tingle, and our hearts to tremble ; and that is, that a man may make so great a progress in the Christian religion, as to prophesy in Christ’s Name, in Christ’s Name to cast out Devils, and in Christ’s Name do many wonderful works, and yet be rejected by Him for

ever. How safe should we think ourselves, how confident should we be of happiness, could you and I pretend and plead so much as this is for it! That we have not only preached, and heard, and prayed, but prophesied too in His Name! And that our faith hath been so strong as to cast out Devils, and work miracles in His Name! But this we may do, and yet come short of Heaven, as our Saviour Himself ver. 23. here intimates unto us; where we may observe, how our Saviour supposes that men may cast out Devils, and do many wonderful things in His Name. And so verily they frequently did for the first three centuries, nothing being more common in those days than for men to command Devils in the Name of Christ to depart out of possessed persons, and to work many other miracles for the propagation of the Gospel, which then was necessary; for if the Gospel had been propagated without miracles, that would have been a greater miracle than all the rest. Yet, howsoever, we may further observe, that our Saviour here makes the working of miracles in His Name no true sign of a real Christian; but that a man may use Christ's Name for the working of miracles, and yet not partake of His merits, for the salvation of his soul: yea, while our Saviour Himself was living, there were some that cast out Mark 9. 38. Devils in His Name, and yet were none of His followers or disciples. And if the working of miracles be no infallible sign of a true Saint, much less is it of a true Church. So that if we should grant all the forgeries of the Church of Rome to have been really done as they pretend they were, this could be no certain argument of their being a true Church, no more than the working of miracles is that a man is a true Christian, which our Saviour Himself plainly denies; asserting, that a man may do it and be damned; which certainly no true Christian shall ever be. And by consequence he that would be a real and true Christian hath a great deal more to do than the casting out Devils, or working miracles in Christ's Name; neither is this at all necessary in order to our eternal happiness.

Thus we see how near we may come to Heaven, and yet come short of it; how much we may do, and yet not do enough; you may be baptized in Christ's Name, and acknowledge Him to be the only Saviour of the world; you may

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hear till your ears, and pray till your tongues, be worn to the stumps; you may dispute, you may write, you may fight for Christ and His religion too: yea, you may cast out Devils in His Name, and in His Name do many wonderful works, and yet not work out your Salvation, nor make your calling and election sure. And therefore all such amongst you as really desire to come to Heaven, must look higher, and do more than all this amounts to; you must not take up with fair pretences instead of saving faith; nor with an outward profession instead of true religion; neither think yourselves any whit the better for being called Christians, unless you be so. For assure yourselves, that your profession of the Gospel, unless you live up to it, will be no diminution, but rather the greatest aggravation of your sins imaginable. For what will Christ say to you when you come to stand before His tribunal? What! you profess My Name, and yet neglect My precepts! Call Me Lord, and yet not serve and honour Me! What! acknowledge My supremacy, and yet not My laws! Believe Me to be your King, and yet rebel against Me! Expect happiness and Salvation from Me, and not perform obedience to Me! “Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity,” that have not only sinned, but sinned against the clearest light, the highest love, the greatest mercies that ever were vouchsafed to the sons of men. You have been a reproach to My Name, a shame to My Gospel, a scandal to My Religion; and therefore “depart from Me into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.” And doubtless, if there be any one place hotter than another in those infernal flames, that will be reserved for the hypocritical professors of the Christian religion; for such as profess Christ with their mouth, and yet deny Him in their hearts and lives, as Christ

Matt. 25. 41.

Matt. 24. 51.

Luke 13. 3.

Himself intimates. Wherefore, let me advise you all not to rest contented any longer with the bare profession of the Gospel; but if you desire to partake of what is promised, be sure to perform what is commanded in it; and think not within yourselves that Christ will save you whether you repent or no; or whether you obey His Gospel or no. Himself hath told you, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish:” and that it is not your speaking of Him, or praying to Him; it is not your calling Him, “Lord,

Lord," will bring you to Heaven, but you must do the will of God: "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he that doth the will of My Father which is in Heaven."

Thus, therefore, having seen how far we may go, and yet not come to Heaven, we are now to consider how far we must go, if we desire to come thither. A question, which you will all grant to be both pertinent and necessary to be resolved. For I dare say there is none of you but desire to be happy, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And let me tell you for your comfort and encouragement, you are all as yet in a capacity of being so. For you still enjoy those means of grace whereby, if you be not wanting to yourselves, through the mercies of God, and the merits of Christ, you may all ere long be so many glorified Saints in Heaven, perfectly free from all, both sin and misery, and perfectly happy in the enjoyment of the chiefest good. Yea, He that made you, as yet is so merciful unto you as to call upon you, and invite you all to partake of those celestial joys which He hath prepared for all those that love and fear Him. And to manifest to all the world how desirous He is to have your company in Heaven, Himself was pleased to come down to shew you the way thither; which He hath done so plainly, that none of you can miss of it that will but sincerely endeavour to look after it before all things else. And that you may not be mistaken, but may be sure to hit upon the right path that leads to life, He hath acquainted you in express terms, both how you may not, and how you may come thither; assuring you, that the external profession of religion, and the frequent using of Scripture language, saying, "Lord, Lord," will never bring any of you to the kingdom of Heaven; but that, if you ever desire to come thither, you must do the will of that God that is in Heaven: "Not every one," saith He, "that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he that doth the will of My Father which is in Heaven."

And I desire you to observe, that these are the words of Him that came into the world on purpose to save and conduct you to Heaven, and by Whom alone it is possible for you to come thither; and therefore you must not think



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there is any way imaginable to evade them. But if ever you desire to know what Heaven is, you must of necessity observe whatsoever is ordered and prescribed you in these words. But that you can never do, unless you first understand them: and therefore I shall endeavour to give you the true meaning and purport of them in as plain and perspicuous terms as possibly I can, being desirous that every soul here present, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, may apprehend what our blessed Saviour means by these words, and by consequence may know what they must do in time, that so they may be happy for ever.

Now, therefore, for the right understanding of these words, there are three things to be considered: first, what is that will of His Father which our Saviour here speaks of; and then how, and why we must do that will, if we desire to come to Heaven.

As for the first, I suppose I need not tell you whom it is that our Saviour means by "His Father which is in Heaven," even the Most High Supreme Governor and Possessor both of Heaven and earth; which glorious Being having made all things by His Almighty power, and still preserving and ordering all things by His infinite wisdom and goodness, His will must needs be a law to all the creatures in the world: that is, all creatures are bound to do whatsoever they know to be the will and pleasure of Almighty God, or rather, whatsoever is revealed to them to be so, whether they take notice of it or no: for it is God's revelation of His will that obligeth us to the performance of it. Now God hath been pleased to make use of several means whereby to discover His will to mankind. To Adam He revealed His will by immediate inspiration: to Noah, Abraham, and the rest of the Patriarchs by vision and appearances, discoursing with them: to the Jews by the Prophets; and to all the world by His Son Jesus Christ, and after Him by His Apostles. Which several revelations of God's will are by His wonderful providence gathered together, and preserved in the Books of the Old and New Testament, which by consequence contain the whole will of God, which it is necessary for men to do, in order to their attaining everlasting happiness.

To know, therefore, what is that will of His Father, which our Saviour here speaks of, we must consult the Scriptures, wherein alone it can be found. But if we search them, they tell us in general, that “this is the will of God, even your sanctification;” where, by sanctification, we are to understand the devotion or dedication of ourselves wholly unto the service of the living God, so as to be really and truly holy; so that universal holiness is a thing indispensably required in order to our entering into the kingdom of Heaven. Where, by holiness, we are to understand the rectitude of all the faculties of the soul, and members of the body, or the right temperament of the whole man, whereby all the faculties of the soul, and members of the body keep themselves within those bounds and limits, and perform those several acts and duties which He that made them hath prescribed them, so as to live as those who are none of our own, but wholly God’s. “For we are bought with a price, and therefore should glorify God both in our body and spirit, which are His.” 1 Thess. 4. 3.

Neither hath it pleased the Most High God to acquaint us only in general, that it is His will we should be holy, but He hath shewed us moreover, in a particular manner, the several acts of holiness which it is His will and pleasure we should perform, both as to Himself, and also to one another.

First, As to Himself: it is the will of God, that you know and acknowledge Him the only Creator, Preserver, Governor, Possessor, and Disposer of the world; “glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, ever doing wonders;” that it is in Him that you “live and move, and have your being;” and whosoever doth not thus know Him, He looks upon as rebels against Him. Exod. 15.  
11.  
Acts 17. 28.  
Isa. 1. 2, 3,  
4.

It is the will of God, moreover, that you really love and prefer Him before all things in the world besides, so as to love nothing above Him, nothing beyond Him, nothing equal to Him, nothing at all in comparison of Him. For thus hath He commanded you, saying, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” Deut. 6. 5.

It is the will of God also, that all the desires of your hearts be fixed upon Him as their proper object, and all the inclinations of your souls concur and meet in Him as their only

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centre, so as not to stoop so low as to lick up the serpent's food, nor debase yourselves so much as to make the fading riches, the carnal pleasures, or the deceitful honours of this transient world, the object of your souls' desires: but that your desires be carried so far above whatsoever is here below, as to rest nowhere but in the chiefest good. That this is His will and pleasure He hath told you by His Son, saying, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof;" and by His Apostle, saying, "Set your affection on things above, not on things which are upon the earth."

Matt. 6. 33.

Col. 3. 2.

Furthermore, it is the will of God, that you fear and dread nothing in the world but Him; that your hearts be possessed with such awful and reverential apprehensions of His Greatness, Wisdom, Justice, Power, and Sovereignty in and over the world, as not to dare to do any thing that is offensive or displeasing unto Him; but still you must "sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear and your dread."

Isa. 8. 13.

Moreover, it is the will of God, that you trust and confide on nothing in the world but Him; that in all your fears and dangers, in all the occurrences and conditions whatsoever, you still support yourselves, and keep up your spirits with the serious consideration of the benignity of the Divine nature in itself, and with an humble confidence on the promises which God hath made unto us in Jesus Christ, without depending at all upon created helps, or expecting any thing from second causes; according to the rule laid down by the wise man, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

Prov. 3. 5.

It is the will of God likewise, that you submit your wills to His, and patiently acquiesce in all His dealings towards you, so as not to murmur against them, or be troubled at them, but still rest fully satisfied with them, as knowing them to proceed from infinite Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness; yea, so as still to "rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our Salvation."

Hab. 3. 18.

In a word: it is the will of the most High God, that you humble yourselves under His mighty hand, confess your sins unto Him, and "abhor yourselves, and repent in dust and ashes" before Him; that you implore His mercy in the pardon of your sins, and His grace for the assistance of your souls in

[Job 42. 6.]

the performance of what He is pleased to require of you ; that you delight yourselves in drawing nigh unto Him, and esteem it your happiness to enjoy communion with Him ; that you admire His power, adore His goodness, praise and magnify His great and all-glorious Name ; that whether you “ eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, ye do it to His glory ;” that you “ know the God of your fathers, and serve Him with a perfect heart and a willing mind,” yea, that “ your light shine before men, that others may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.”

1 Cor. 10. 31.

1 Chron. 28. 9.

Matt. 5. 16.

And then, as to your behaviour towards one another, it is the will of God that “ you do unto others as you would have others do to you ;” that you “ do not go beyond or defraud each other ;” that it is the will of God, that “ you love one another as Christ hath loved you.” It is the will of God, that “ ye walk with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” It is the will of God, that you be loyal to your sovereign, obedient to your governors, peaceable with your neighbours, faithful to your friends, loving to your enemies, liberal to the poor, helpful to the weak, just and equitable towards all.

Matt. 7. 12.

1 Thess. 4. 6.

John 15. 12.

Eph. 4. 2, 3.

In a word, That will of God is, that you “ deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.”

Tit. 2. 12.

Thus, therefore, you have seen the sum and substance of that will of God, which your Saviour Himself here tells you you must observe, or never come to Heaven. But some, perhaps, may wonder why I have made no mention of faith in Christ, which the Scriptures make absolutely necessary to our Salvation. To that I answer, that I have already mentioned it, though perhaps you took no notice of it ; and that was in speaking of those acts of piety which God wills us to perform immediately to Himself, whereof I told you trusting on God was one. And certainly to trust and rely upon the promises which God hath made unto us of pardon and Salvation in Jesus Christ, and, by consequence, to trust in Christ for the accomplishment of those promises, is not only one of the highest acts of piety which we can exert, but it is that very grace of faith on which our everlasting happi-



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ness doth so much depend. And therefore it is ridiculous to assert, or fancy, that our Saviour's saying here, that "he which doth the will of God shall enter into Heaven," implies, that moral virtues or good works are sufficient to bring us thither without faith in Christ, whereas faith itself is questionless one of the highest acts of obedience that it is possible for us to perform; so that whosoever doth not believe in Christ, doth not fulfil the moral law, but is deficient in one of the principal parts of it; for he doth not trust in God, but rather makes Him a liar, as the Apostle tells us. He, therefore, that would do the will of God, must of necessity believe in Christ, because it is God's will we should do so. And whosoever believes in Christ shall most certainly be saved; not by virtue of his faith as it is an act of grace in general, or part of our moral obedience, but because whosoever believes and trusteth on Jesus Christ, and on the promises made in Him for pardon and acceptance, God is pleased both to pardon and accept him by virtue of His merits and mediation on Whom he trusteth. So that it is not by our believing in Christ, but by Christ in Whom we believe, that we can ever come to Heaven. And it is very observable, that our blessed Saviour Himself, Who here tells, that he that doth the will of His Father shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, elsewhere saith, "and this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life." From whence it is plain, that though he that doth the will of God shall have everlasting life, yet it is not because he doth the will of God, but because it is God's good will and pleasure, that "whosoever believeth in His Son should have everlasting life," in, and through Him on Whom he doth believe.

Thus, therefore, I have shewn what that will of God is which we must do, if we desire to come to Heaven, even that we obey the precepts of the law, and believe in the promises of the Gospel. Hence it was that our Saviour made this the subject of the first sermon He preached, "Repent and believe the Gospel." Which two commands do most certainly contain the whole will of God, which men are bound to observe in order to their everlasting happiness: repentance there implying, not only our mourning for sin, but also our turning

from it ; neither our eschewing of evil only, but likewise our doing good : and believing the Gospel is the same with believing in Christ, on which the pardon of our sins, the acceptance of our persons, and the eternal Salvation of our souls, depend.

By this time, therefore, I hope you will understand what is that will of His Father, of which our Saviour here saith, that he who doeth it shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven. But it is not enough that you know what is the will of God which you ought to do, unless you know likewise how you ought to do it ; which therefore is the next thing to be considered. And to prepare you the better for the right understanding of it, give me leave to premise unto you, that it is an harder matter to do the will of God, and there is a great deal more required to it, than men commonly think of. For the mere doing the thing that God wills, is not always doing the will of God : for His will and commands extend to the manner as well as to the matter of our actions, having prescribed not only what we should do, but how we should do it too : and, therefore, he that fails either way, either by not doing what God wills, or by not doing it as He wills it should be done, cannot be said to do the will of God.

Now, we must know that God's will is to be observed by all His creatures, in the highest manner that they are capable of observing it. The sun, moon, and stars, and all other inanimate, yea, and mere sensitive creatures too, not being endowed with any inward principle, whereby to reflect upon the commands which He that made them hath laid upon them, they do the will of God sufficiently by observing the motions, and keeping the stations which He hath set them : but man being a rational creature, endowed with an understanding to know, and with a will to choose, as well as with power to do what God commands him, it is not sufficient that he doth it, unless his understanding and will too be exercised in the doing of it.

First, therefore, to our doing the will of God, it is necessary that our understandings be employed in considering that it is His will, and commending it to us under that notion, that so we may not only do it, but may therefore

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do it, because it is God's will and pleasure; otherwise though we may perhaps do what God wills, yet we cannot be said to do His will, because we do not do it under that notion, or upon that account because it is His will. As for example: you give an alms to the poor; it is very good, and it is the will of God you should do it; yet if you do it only out of compassion, or upon some bye and sinister account, not considering the will of God in it, God doth not look upon His will as performed, nor on Himself as concerned in what you do, any farther than to punish you for not observing His will. Again; you are now here in the presence of God, where it is God's will you should be; but though some of you may, I fear many of you do not, do the will of God in coming hither, not coming out of any such design or intention as to obey the will of God, but only out of custom or formality, or perhaps being servants, your masters, or being children, your parents, would have you come; and, by consequence, it is their wills rather than God's which you regard and fulfil in coming. Neither can you be ever said to do the will of God, unless you therefore, or upon that consideration only do it, because it is the will of God. And one single act of obedience, performed after this manner, shall be more acceptable to God, and more advantageous to yourselves, than all the most plausible and specious actions of your whole life besides: as

Matt.10.42. our Saviour Himself saith, that "he that giveth to a disciple a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, shall have his reward;" so whatsoever we do, if we but do it *eo nomine*, because it is the will of God, we shall most certainly find the benefit and comfort of it.

Neither are our understandings only, but our wills likewise, to be employed in doing the will of God, so as to make it the matter of our choice, and to will the doing of it, because God doth so. And verily, there is more in this than commonly we are aware of; yea, so much that we can do nothing of God's will without it: forasmuch as the very essence of true obedience consisteth in the inclination of our wills to God's, in willing what He wills, and because He wills it. So that the great art and mystery of doing well lies in our willingness and inclination to do it; without

which, howsoever glorious our actions may seem to men, they are altogether odious and abominable unto God: because at the same time that we outwardly perform them, we have an inward averseness and reluctancy against them. And so, though we may seem to do what God requires, yet doing it against our wills, it must needs be contrary to God's will too, Who requires our whole man, soul as well as body, to be employed in the doing of what He commands; and hath enjoined us to "serve Him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind." Thus David, "I delight to do Thy will, O God: Thy Law is within my heart." 1 Chron. 28. 9. Ps. 40. 8. This is doing the will of God indeed, when our wills run thus parallel with God's, and we are as willing and ready to obey as He is to command; when we delight to do the will of God, and please ourselves in pleasing Him. This is that which our Saviour here calls "doing the will of His Father which is in Heaven."

From whence, in the last place, it necessarily follows, that he who would do the will of God, must do the whole will of God: for he whose heart is so inclined and bent to God, as to delight to do His will, because it is His, he cannot but delight in all the commands of God, one as well as another, because they are all equally the will of God. He doth not will one duty or virtue more than another, so neither should we; we must not pick and choose, nor think to put God off with a partial obedience, which indeed is no obedience at all, nothing deserving that glorious title, but a sincere "respect unto all the commandments" of God. Ps. 119. 6.

Well then, if you would do the will of God, you must not content yourselves with some particular acts of piety towards God, and equity towards your neighbour; but whatsoever God hath bid you do in Scripture, you must be sure to do it, and that with cheerfulness and delight too, as it is the command of God, so as to use the utmost of your endeavour in observing all things that are required of you: and yet when all is done, look upon yourselves as unprofitable servants, for that is the will of God too; as also that they depend on Christ alone for pardon and acceptance. And whosoever thus doth God's will, need not Luke 17. 10.



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fear but he shall enter into the “kingdom of Heaven;” for you have the words of Christ Himself here for it.

Having thus shewn you what is the will of God which we must do, and how it is that we must do it, if we desire to enter into the kingdom of God, I hope I need not spend much time in convincing you, that unless you thus do this will of God, you shall never come thither. For I dare say you all believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, and the only Saviour of mankind; and that it is only by Him that you can be saved, and admitted into the kingdom of Heaven; and therefore you cannot, surely, but take His Word for what you must do, in order to your obtaining that happiness which Himself hath purchased for you with His Own blood. Yet you see that He Himself hath told you, as plainly as He could, that it is not your calling Him “Lord, Lord,” can bring you to Heaven, but you must “do the will of His Father which is in Heaven,” if ever you desire to come thither. And therefore, do not you please yourselves with the groundless hopes of going to Heaven when ye die, unless you do the will of God whilst you are alive; neither think that Christ so died for your sins, that you shall be happy whether you forsake them or no.

It is true, I do not deny, but look upon it as a fundamental article of the Christian faith, and the only ground of all our hopes in another world, that Jesus Christ, by His death and passion, hath made full and complete satisfaction to the justice of God for the sins of mankind; or, as the

1 John 2. 2. Apostle words it, “He was a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world;” but we must not think that this satisfaction of Christ will be imputed, or this righteousness applied, to any person that doth not perform the conditions required in order to it; or that doth not repent of his sin, and obey the Gospel. For notwithstanding all that He hath done and suffered for us, we still find Him pressing the duties of the moral law, and obedience to the will of God, as strictly as if we were to be saved by it; and particularly in my text He assures us, that for all His glorious undertakings for us, yet we must do the will of God, or else we shall never enter into the kingdom of Heaven: and therefore it is in vain for

us to expect pardon or Salvation from Christ Himself, unless we do what He hath commanded us, endeavouring to the utmost of our power to adjust and conform our lives to the laws and commands of God, so as to be "holy in all manner of conversation;" without which "no man shall ever see the Lord," as the Lord Himself, Whom we desire to see, hath told us. [1 Pet. 1. 15.]  
Heb. 12. 14.

What mean you, then, my brethren, to buoy up yourselves with vain and groundless hopes of happiness in another world, and in the meanwhile indulge yourselves in known sins, or live in the constant neglect of your duty to God or man? What, do you think to disannul the counsels, and revoke the decrees of Heaven? To make Christ Himself a liar, and His words void and of none effect? How, then, can you expect to go to Heaven without doing the will of God, when Christ Himself hath told you in plain terms, that you shall not? Have you any other way of getting to Heaven but by Him? No, God Himself hath told you there "is no name given under Heaven, whereby you can be saved, but the Name of Christ." Acts 4. 12. But what, will He allow you to continue in your sins, and yet save you for all that? Or hath He given you any encouragement or intimation that you may be happy hereafter, howsoever you live here? Or hath He granted you any such indulgence, as His pretended vicar at Rome doth, even for sins past, present, and to come? No, mistake not yourselves, He is so far from that, that while He was upon earth He made it His business to convince men of the danger of sin, and the necessity of holiness, in order to eternal bliss. And therefore have a care of fathering your sins on Him: do not think that He will ever patronise them; nor feed yourselves with fancies, that when you come to stand before Christ's tribunal, He will absolve you from your sins, whether you have repented of them or no; or advance you to everlasting glory, whether you have obeyed the will of God or no. No, He hath told you beforehand, and that in as plain and familiar terms as possibly He could, that He will not; assuring you, that "none shall ever enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of His Father Which is in Heaven;" which He therefore hath forewarned you of,

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that you may not expect any such thing at His hands, as to be made happy hereafter, without being holy here. For that you can never be ; there is an impossibility in the thing itself, that any soul should be happy, and yet not holy at the same time.

But seeing this notion, rightly considered and improved, will be of extraordinary use to convince you of the indispensable necessity of doing the will of God, and being holy in order to your being truly happy in another world ; I shall endeavour to explain it more fully and clearly to you. To which end I desire you to consider seriously with yourselves what Heaven is, and wherein that happiness consists which is to be had there. Heaven is a place you often speak of, and you all pretend a title to it : but what kind of place do you fancy it to be ? Do you imagine it to be like the old Elysian Fields, or the Turkish Paradise, full of carnal pleasures and sensual delights ? Or do you conceive it like the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, which the Jews still look for, wherein you shall be enriched with earthly possessions, and have the highest titles of civil honour conferred upon you ? Or do you think it like any thing upon earth, which the men of this world are so much taken with ? If these be your thoughts of Heaven, I do not wonder that you mind it so little, and think holiness so impertinent and unnecessary in order to it : for the more holy you are, the less happiness you will find in such toys and trifles as these are.

But assure yourselves, if ever it shall please the Most High God to bring any of you to Heaven, you will find it to be quite another thing from all the seeming pleasures of this lower world ; consisting in nothing else but beholding, admiring, praising, and enjoying the Most High God. And though many of you may think this to be no such great happiness as the Scriptures would make it, yet questionless it is not only the greatest, but the only happiness that our souls are capable of ; it being that which at their first creation they were designed for : and therefore were so composed, that they are always restless and out of tune, until they be fixed upon God, as their proper object ; and are only so far happy as their inclinations meet in Him, as their only centre. And therefore, when the souls of just men are

made perfect in Heaven, so as to be able to behold the glory and enjoy all the perfections that are concentrated in the Chiefest Good, then, and then alone, can they be said to be completely happy; having as much, yea, infinitely more than they can desire: and, by consequence, cannot but be fully satisfied with what they do enjoy. Hence David saith, “In Thy presence is fulness of joy, at Thy right hand there Ps. 16. 11. are pleasures for evermore.”

Consider this, and then tell me what happiness would it be for a sinful man to be in Heaven; what joy or pleasure could he take in being there? Alas! there is nothing that he cares for or desires there. There is no such thing as houses or lands to be got, no silver or gold to be heaped up: there is no such thing as popular applause to please his fancy, nor sensual pleasures to delight his flesh: there is nothing but the vision and fruition of the Chiefest Good; which he esteems as nothing; yea, is naturally averse from it: so that he had rather be running from God, than drawing nigh unto Him: or suppose he should have a mind to partake of those pure and spiritual delights; so long as sinful, he is not qualified for it: he wants that inward rectitude, and right temper and disposition of mind, by which alone a man is capable of solacing and delighting himself in the enjoyment of the Chiefest Good: which depends not so much upon our being with Him, as upon the bent and inclination of our souls to Him: for it is not our being where God is, can make us happy; for then all the creatures in the world would be so, because God is with them: He is with the damned in Hell as well as with the Saints in Heaven, but they in Hell are so far from taking pleasure in His presence, that it is a torment and a burden to them; because their souls, being altogether impure and sinful, have a natural antipathy against His holiness and purity; whereas the Saints in Heaven, being holy as He is holy, cannot but be ravished with the presence of His transcendent holiness; because it meets, as I may so say, with its likeness in them: which every sinful soul being destitute of, and so unlike to God, and by consequence averse from Him, His presence affords more matter of trouble and disquiet, than of joy and comfort to them. Hence it is that the Apostle saith, “that 1 Cor. 15. 50.



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flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption;" where, by "flesh" and "blood," we are to understand men in their sinful and corrupt estate, who, as the Apostle tells us, not only "shall not," but "cannot inherit the Kingdom of God;" being altogether incapable of enjoying the pleasures of it.

But to bring this home more close unto yourselves: suppose there be any here present at this time, as I fear there are too many, who are yet in their sins, their hearts not being as yet converted unto God, but still inclined to sin and vanity; suppose such of you should be immediately taken from the place where you are, and carried up into the highest Heavens, and there placed not only amongst the glorified Saints, but just by Christ Himself, shining in all His glory; and there hear and see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, together with the Cherubims and Seraphims, and the rest of the heavenly choir, praising and adoring the Most High God, and the Lamb that sitteth upon the throne: would you think this any great matter of joy and pleasure? Or would not you rather wonder to see them so transported at that which you can fancy nothing of delight in? Would you be ever the happier for being there? Or rather, would not you be weary of the place, and long to be out of it? Yes, questionless, you that think it so great a trouble to be an hour or two in the presence of God on earth, it would be much more irksome to you to be in Heaven; where the company would seem troublesome, the employment tedious, and Heaven itself would seem more like Hell than Heaven, a place of torment rather than a place of pleasure to you: and all because you want that inward principle of real holiness, without which you are in an utter incapacity of being affected or delighted with the happiness of Heaven. Insomuch, that a blind man may as soon delight in pictures, and the deaf in music; yea, a brute beast may as soon surfeit himself upon the pleasures of a mathematical demonstration, as ever a sinful soul be ravished with those celestial joys, which are not only above him, but contrary to his very temper and inclinations; so that it is absolutely impossible for any man in the world to be happy without being so thoroughly holy as to delight in doing the will of God; whereby alone it

is that any of us are "meet to be partakers of the inheritance Col. 1. 12. of the Saints in light," as the Apostle words it.

Wonder not, therefore, at our Saviour's assertion here, that they only shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, that do the will of His Father Which is in Heaven. For be sure none shall ever come to Heaven but such as are capable of enjoying the pleasures of it; but that no man is, or can be, whose heart is not so renewed and inclined to the living God, as always to do His will and pleasure to the utmost of His power and skill: which I have spent the more time in clearing up unto you, because one great reason why so many perish is, that they are not thoroughly persuaded, or at least do not consider, that they neither shall, nor can be happy hereafter, unless they be holy here. For were you but rightly convinced of this, methinks you that desire to go to Heaven should not dare to omit any thing that you know to be God's will, or do any thing that is contrary to it.

But I hope by this time your judgments are so clearly informed concerning the necessity of a good, in order to an happy, life, that I need not use any more arguments to prove it. Howsoever, give me leave to add, that your knowing this great truth will signify nothing unless you live up unto it; your being convinced of the necessity of doing the will of God, in order to your going to Heaven, will never bring you thither, unless you do it. And therefore, all such amongst you as unfeignedly desire to be happy for ever, be advised, without any more ado, to set yourselves in good earnest to do and perform whatsoever you know to be the Divine will: and for your encouragement thereunto, give me leave to tell you, that whatsoever the world thinks of it, doing the will of God is both the most honourable, the most pleasant, and the most profitable work that any of you can possibly be engaged in. And these three things you know, "honour, pleasure," and "profit," are the principal, if not only, motives and encitements to your undertaking of any employment whatsoever: but they nowhere concur so much as in doing the will of God.

For, first, that it is the most honourable employment in the world, you must needs grant, because it is the employment of the most honourable persons in the world: it is the

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 Psalm 16. 3. continual employment of the Saints upon earth, whom the Holy Ghost Himself asserts to be honourable, excellent persons, yea, "more excellent then their neighbours." It was the employment of Christ Himself when He was upon earth; Acts 10. 38. for "He went about doing good." It is the employment of all the Saints and Angels now in Heaven; nay, why do I speak of them?—it is the employment of God Himself; for He is always fulfilling His Own will, and doing what Himself pleaseth. What a rare and honourable employment then must this needs be, for us poor mortals upon earth to be always doing as the glorious Angels in Heaven do, and walk as Christ Himself walked when He was here below; yea, to carry on the same designs in the world, which the Most High God Himself doth; and by consequence receive 1 Sam. 2. 30. honour not from men, but God Himself; "for them that [Psalm 149. 9.] honour Me," saith He, "I will honour." "This honour have all the Saints," and this honour may all you have that will but do the will of God.

Neither would I have you think that you must bid adieu to all true joy and pleasure, when once you devote yourselves to the will of God: no, you will be so far from that, that you will then begin to know what true pleasure is, when you begin to do what is pleasing unto God; not only from that inward quiet and satisfaction in your minds, arising from the consideration of having performed your duty to Almighty God, but likewise from the apprehension of God's love and favour to you, which He hath promised to all those that do His will. Hence the Wise Man tells us, Prov. 3. 17. "The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Yea, they that do the will of God must needs live pleasantly in the world; it being God's will we should do so; He having commanded us to "rejoice always," Phil. 4. 4. and that in the Lord Himself; so that whosoever doth the will of God, antedates the very joys of Heaven, doing that in time which it will be his happiness to do for ever.

And then, lastly, for the profit and advantage which will accrue unto you, upon doing the will of God, it is infinitely more than I am able to express, or you to desire. For hereby you will have a title to and interest in all things that are good for you, in Heaven above, or earth beneath; or as

the Apostle tells you, all things will be yours. For indeed <sup>1 Cor. 3. 21.</sup> God Himself will be yours, as I have observed upon another occasion, and whatsoever He is, or hath, will be made over to you; His wisdom yours to direct you, His mercy yours to pardon you; His power yours to protect you; His righteousness yours to clothe you; and His goodness and all-sufficiency yours to satisfy your souls for ever, and as what He is, He will be unto you; so whatsoever He hath, He will confer upon you. Hath He a Son? He hath died for you: hath He a Spirit? That shall live with you: is earth His? That shall be your provision: is Heaven His? That shall be your portion: hath He grace? That shall make you holy: hath He glory? That shall make you happy: for He will give grace and glory, “and no good thing will He withhold from <sup>Ps. 84. 11.</sup> them that walk uprightly.”

Thus we have seen not only how necessary it is, in order to our everlasting happiness, to do the will of God, but also how honourable, pleasant, and profitable a thing it is to do it. And therefore, I hope, I need not use any more words to persuade you to give up yourselves for the future wholly to the service of God. I dare say you all desire to go to Heaven, and to be happy in the enjoyment of God for ever. But that you can never be, unless you do the will of God; Christ Himself, you hear, hath told you so: and do you believe His words to be true, or do you not? I know you do. But what mean you then that you do not resolve, by the grace and assistance of God, to set yourselves in good earnest upon doing whatsoever you know to be His will and pleasure. Dally no longer in a matter of such importance as this is. If you care not whether you go to Heaven or no, what do you here? What need you concern yourselves about the way that leadeth thither? But if you really desire, as you pretend, to be admitted into Heaven, and to live with God and Christ for ever, take my advice in few terms grounded upon the words of our blessed Saviour Himself: take not up with a formal profession of the Christian religion, nor rest in the external performance of some particular duties required in it. Think it not enough to come to church, and hear sermons. But repent of all your former sins, and be converted from them; and for the future let it



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be your great and only care and study in this world, to square and order your thoughts and affections, your words and actions, all according to the laws and commands of the Most High God. Love God above all things; trust on His promises; fear His threatenings; obey His precepts; believe in His Son; reverence His Name and Word; and for His sake do nothing that you know to be a sin; omit nothing that you know to be your duty, either to God or men, to the utmost of your power. Do thus, and you need not fear but your souls shall live, not only with Saints and Angels, but with Christ and God Himself, for evermore.

## SERMON CXXXVII.

OF SETTING OUR AFFECTIONS ON THINGS ABOVE.

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COLOSSIANS, iii. 2.

*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

MAN being a perfect microcosm, composed of two essential parts, a soul and a body, whereof the one was taken from the superior, and the other from this inferior world : hence it necessarily follows, that although both these parts do equally concur unto the constitution of a man, yet that which is of the purest nature, and most noble extract, must needs be designed at first to govern and rule the whole, and by consequence that man, according to his constitution, was always to live and act according to the dictates and commands of his rational soul, and not according to the inclinations of his sensitive part : but by the degeneracy of our first parents, in hearkening to their senses rather than to their reason, our souls have ever since been subject to the tyranny of our rebellious senses : and that part which at first was placed at the stern, to sway and order the whole man, according to those principles of reason which were infused into it upon that account, is now debased so low as to become a slave to every one of these senses which it was made to govern. And therefore, our great care in this world should be to restore our souls to their throne and kingdom again ; so that our flesh may not any longer usurp any

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power and dominion over them, as heretofore it hath done, and still will do, unless we keep a strict eye upon it.

Now, as it was in the first Adam that our souls lost their power, though not their right, to govern, so it is only by the second that they can ever recover it again. But our comfort is, that as in Adam we fell from Heaven to earth, so in Christ we rose again from earth to Heaven; as the Apostle intimates in the foregoing verse, "If ye then be risen with Christ." For when Christ rose, all those that by a true faith were united to Him, could not but rise with Him; yea, so rise with Him in our souls, as to live with Him in Heaven, even whilst our bodies are upon the earth. For this the Apostle makes the necessary consequent of our being risen with Christ: "If ye then be risen with Christ," saith he, "seek those things which are above;" that is, your souls being now sanctified by Christ, and risen with Him, have by that means got above your flesh and senses, and therefore you should not mind them any longer, nor suffer them any more to get the upper hand, but your souls should still be soaring aloft, looking after their eternal concerns in Heaven, "where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." Which that we may do, we must be sure to call in for all our affections from all things here below, and fix them only upon those things which are above, where our Saviour now is, and where we hope to be for ever: and therefore he adds, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

Having thus brought you to the words, I shall endeavour to carry you through them, by explaining unto you the true meaning and purport of them; which it must needs behove you all rightly to understand, forasmuch as you all desire, I hope, to live like Christians, and as becometh those who expect to be saved by Christ. But you can never live as they must do, whom Christ will save, nor by consequence be saved by Him, unless you repent and believe in Him. Neither have you any ground in the world to think you repent and believe in Him, unless your affections be where He is; which notwithstanding they can never be, so long as they are entangled amongst the sensual and earthly objects here below.

Now for the better understanding what is here commanded, I shall first explain the words themselves, and then the duties enjoined in them.

I. For the things which are here called τὰ ἄνω, "Things above." Some things may be said to be above, in respect of nature; other things in respect of the earth. But here by "the things above," we are plainly to understand things above earth, in that they are here opposed to things upon the earth: and therefore the "things above" here, are such things as are of an higher nature, and more noble principles, than to derive their descent from any thing here below. And so we are commanded here to set our affections only upon those pleasures that are above, those honours that are above, those riches that are above, those friends and relations that are above, that God, that Christ, that All that is above.

Then, by the things upon the earth, we are here to understand such things as are conceived in the womb of the earth, and know no higher extract than dust and ashes; of this sort are all your carnal pleasures, your earthly riches, your popular applause; all which the Apostle comprehends under "the <sup>1 John 2.16.</sup> lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." "The lust of the flesh," that is, only luxury or carnal pleasures, which only tickle and delight the flesh. "The lust of the eye," that is, earthly riches which can only flatter and please the eye. And "the pride of life," that is, vain glory, which indeed is but a mere vapour, a shadow, a little froth, a very nothing; yet it is that which puffs up poor vain and silly mortals, and therefore it is called "the pride of life." And it is very observable, that these were the three baits wherewith Satan caught our first parents, and plucked them out of that ocean of happiness wherein they were created. <sup>Gen. 3. 6.</sup> First, he proposed the fruit as good for food; there was the lust of the flesh: then as pleasant to the eye; there was the lust of the eye: and then as a fruit to be desired, to make men wise; there was the pride of life. These, therefore, being the weapons wherewith the Devil prevailed over our first parents, it is no wonder that he useth them so frequently and effectually against us: but we need not fear, if we can but perform this one duty, even not to set our affection upon them.



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The word in the original is *φρονεῖν*, which, as to its notation and common use, hath respect both to the understanding and will: as it respects the understanding, it denotes that our thoughts should not run upon the things upon earth, but that our meditations be always fixed upon those things that are in Heaven. But, as the word hath reference to the will, it implies the several motions of the will, which we call affections; and so we are here commanded not only not to mind, but also not to love, not to desire, not to hope on, not to rejoice in the things which are here below, but only in those things which are above. So as although we are in the world, and converse with the things of it, yet we are not to concern ourselves about them, any further than to do our duty in the station wherein God hath set us, and prepare ourselves as well as we can for our going into the other world, our hearts hanging loose and indifferent as to all things here below, being fixed only upon God, and those glories that are above.

II. This being the proper meaning of the words, our next work must be to shew the reasonableness of the duties here enjoined. But seeing it is in vain to speak of setting your affections on things above, until they are first taken off from the things upon the earth, I shall first endeavour to shew what little reason you have to trouble your heads so much about the things which are here below, or to set your affections upon them. And speaking not only to rational creatures, but, as I hope, to believing Christians, I hope you will so seriously weigh and consider the force of the arguments which I shall produce, as to resolve, by the blessing of God, for the future, not to suffer your affections to lie grovelling amongst such low and pitiful things as all things upon earth are in themselves, but much more in comparison of what you all expect in Heaven.

1. Therefore, let me desire you to bethink yourselves of whatsoever it is that you have or desire upon earth, and consider whether it be not altogether below you, and unsuitable to you, both as men and Christians; for so at present I will suppose you all to be. But are you Christians? then let me tell you, you are sons and daughters of the eternal God, the only Monarch of the whole world, and so are heirs apparent to the Crown of Glory. Tell me, then, what an unseemly

sight would it be to see a prince doting upon a beggar, and robes enamoured with rags! How much more unseemly is it for you who have nothing less than Heaven entailed upon you, to lie doting upon the beggarly vanities of this lower world! Which certainly all true Christians should look upon as below their concern, carrying themselves as becometh those who expect ere long to solace themselves in the enjoyment of God Himself. While David looked to his father's sheep, he carried himself as a shepherd; but when he had mounted the throne, majesty presently sat in his brows, and he behaved himself like a king. So you, although whilst you lived in your sins, and so were strangers unto God, you then lived like earthly creatures conversing with nothing but dust and clay; yet now that you profess to have repented, and to believe in Christ, and so to be entitled to the kingdom of Heaven, you should live like yourselves, and scorn to stoop so low as to lick up the serpent's food; deporting yourselves as those who every moment look to be sent for, to go and take possession of your celestial crown. The very thoughts whereof should make you disdain the highest enjoyments that this world is able to afford you, as things not worthy to be compared with the glory that Christ hath procured for you. So that, let me tell you, so long as your thoughts and affections are taken up with any thing upon earth, you act below yourselves, and unsuitable to your profession. For tell me seriously, you that expect ere long to bathe yourselves in those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore, can it become you to drown yourselves in a deluge of carnal pleasures and sensual delights? You that have such plenty of bread and heavenly manna in your Father's house, is it not below you to feed like the prodigal upon husks, with the swine of this world? You that hope ere long to trample upon the moon, and to be advanced above the stars themselves, is it fitting for you to lie under a clod of earth? In a word: You that expect ere long to be invested with all the bliss and happiness that a creature is capable of, is it a comely thing for you in the meanwhile to spend your time in running after shadows, and in playing with childish gewgaws? in raking in the dirt, or treading in the mire? Is this proper work for the heirs of Heaven to be employed in?

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[Eph. 4. 1.]

Or is this to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called?" No, surely; and therefore, so long as you suffer your affections to be bent upon the things below, you act below yourselves as men, much more as Christians.

Hence, in the next place, the things upon earth being thus below you, they can never satisfy your desires; for nothing can do that, but what is better than yourselves. Whereas all things here below are so far below you, that they deserve not to be regarded at all by you: and, therefore, although you may have too much of them, you can never have enough of them; never so much as to satisfy your souls, and make

Job 30. 15. you happy. Job compares this world to a cloud; the  
Ps. 78. 39. Psalmist compares it to wind; and the Prophet to smoke.  
Hos. 13. 3.

And who was ever yet satisfied with clouds, with wind, with smoke? But these things have something of reality in them, and therefore you may think to wring something of satisfaction from them; but who could ever yet be satisfied with nothing? But riches are nothing, as Solomon himself,

Prov. 23. 5. witnesseth, saying, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings;" and a greater than Solomon, even Christ Him-

Luke 8. 18. self, saying, "Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have," or that which he thinketh he hath. For the things of this world have no other existence but in our thoughts and fancies: abstract but the imagination, and they presently vanish and disappear; so that you may easily wink the greatest beauty into blackness and deformity, earth's greatest light into darkness and obscurity. Think gold dirt, and it is so: think the pomp and grandeur of this transient world vanity, and it is so. And can such things, or rather nothings, which have no other existence but only in the roving fancies of deluded mortals; can they, I say, ever satisfy an immortal soul? No, certainly: although it should please Almighty God to give any one of you, not only one, but all the crowns and sceptres, all the kingdoms and empires of this world, you would be as far from being satisfied as you are or can be now; yea, and farther too: for the more you had, the more you would desire; so that you can never rest contented, or fully satisfied, but only in the enjoyment of

Him that is the centre of all perfections. And seeing all things upon earth can never afford any satisfaction to you, what reason have you to set your affections upon them?

Especially considering that they are not only vain and unsatisfying, but troublesome and disquieting too. They are not only vanity, yea, "vanity of vanities," but they are [Ecc. 1. 14.] "vexation of spirit also." For you cannot but all be sensible what cares you underwent to get, and what fears you are still in to keep what you have got; so that trouble and vexation attend both the getting and preserving all earthly enjoyments. You have an expression in Job, "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?" What is here meant by treasures of snow? St. Gregory tells you, the "treasures of snow are worldly riches, which men take a great deal of care and pains to gather together, as children do snow, with no small hazard of their lives; and having rolled it together into heaps, and fashioned them into the shapes of horses, or giants, and towers, they begin to fancy use, and power and safety in them: but whilst they are mightily applauding and pleasing themselves in what they have gotten, there comes a shower and washeth it all away, leaving nothing in the room of it but dirt and mire. And this is all they get for what they have done, even to be vexed and troubled for the loss of what they had got." I need not apply it, none of you but may do that yourselves from your own experience; which I am confident cannot but have taught you all, that there is more trouble and vexation than of happiness and satisfaction in all things here below; and therefore you must needs conclude them unworthy of your affections. Job 38. 22.

But if there was any thing of usefulness in them, to countervail the trouble you undergo for them, something might be said in excuse for your so eager pursuit of them: but, alas! they are altogether as impertinent and unnecessary, as they are troublesome and vexatious. First, they are unnecessary as to the making you truly happy: for happiness is a jewel that never yet was, nor ever will be found in earth's bowels: as Job saith of wisdom, "The depth saith, It is not in me; Job 28. 14. and the earth saith, It is not with me," so we may say of happiness: go to your wealth, and ask that for happiness, and that will say, It is not in me: go to your car-



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nal pleasure, and ask that for happiness, and that will say, It is not in me: go to all things that you have, or can desire on earth, and ask them for happiness, and they will answer with one accord, It is not in us. Nay, the things of this world are so far from making us happy, that we can never be completely happy, until we leave them. For, where can you expect to be happy, but in Heaven? But in Heaven, although you will have glory in its lustre, happiness in its perfection, yet not one dram of any earthly enjoyment. There is infinite light, and yet neither sun nor moon; there are glorious robes, and yet neither silks nor satins: there are rivers of pleasures, and yet neither wine nor water: there are most delicate banquets, feasts of fat things, and yet neither meat nor drink: there are large possessions, and yet neither house nor land: there is most ravishing beauty, and yet neither red nor white: there are rich treasures indeed, and yet neither gold nor silver. In one word; there is all of Heaven, and yet nothing at all of earth: so little of happiness is couched under this clod of earth, that it keeps us from it, rather than helps us to it.

And then, as the things on earth cannot make us happy themselves, so neither can they conduce to our being made so. For who ever yet could swim to Heaven in a deluge of carnal pleasures, or was blown thither by the breath of popular air? Whom did you ever hear of, that purchased an inheritance in the land of Canaan out of his revenues in this wilderness? or transported his goods from this city into that which is above, so as to exchange them there for crowns of glory, and sceptres of eternal righteousness? If this was feasible, then I should not wonder that men are so eager for the world, so covetous for the greatness of it. But do not deceive yourselves, you are never the nearer Heaven for standing higher upon earth; nor in more likelihood to be rich to eternity, because you are so in time. I confess, if you have ten talents, and improve them all well, you shall be made rulers over ten cities. If you have much here below, and lay it all out for your Master's use, for the glory of God, a richer crown of glory will be set upon your heads. But observe and remember it, it is your using, not your having of this world's goods that will enhance your glory; but

your having without using them, will but increase your misery and torment. And seeing it is so hard to use them aright, you have but little cause to be so desirous of them; especially considering that our Saviour Himself, by Whom alone it is possible for us to come to Heaven, saith in express terms, that "a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven," and "with men," saith He, "this is impossible, but with God all things are possible;" whereby He intimates to us, that nothing less than the extraordinary and infinite power of God can enable a rich man to carry himself, and improve his estate so as ever to come to Heaven, by reason of the strong temptations which they are continually subject to. Or howsoever this be, sure our Saviour in these words suggests to us, that it is more difficult for a rich man than for a poor man to get to Heaven; and, by consequence, that his riches are no furtherance, but rather an hindrance in his way thither; which did you but seriously consider, methinks you should rather fear than desire wealth; and be so far from setting your affections upon the things upon earth, as to make them the object of your hatred and detestation.

Matt. 19.  
23, 24, 25.  
ver. 26.

In the last place, consider how fleeting and unconstant the things of this world always were, still are, and ever will be to the end of the world. You heard even now what they are compared to by God Himself, even to wind, to smoke, and clouds; and tell me, what sooner vanisheth than smoke? what is sooner scattered than a cloud? and what is more unconstant than the wind? All ages have afforded you instances of this kind, even of the instability and uncertainty of all things here below. First, David was mounted up to the highest pinnacle of honour, the Israelites crying out, "We have ten parts in the king:" but, in the very next verse, the wind was turned into another quarter; for Sheba did but blow a trumpet, and they presently cry out, "We have no part in David." Thus he was cried up and down with the same breath. Thus whilst Belshazzar was gulping down his frolic cups, and taking his fill of earthly pleasures, there appears but an hand-writing upon the wall, and the man presently falls a trembling. Thus Herod comes out in all his pomp, and sits upon his throne in all his

2 Sam. 19.  
43.

ch. 20. 1.

Acts 12. 23.

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Luke 12. 19,  
20.

glory, and God sends but a company of silly worms, and they destroy his highness and honour too. Thus methinks I see the rich man in the Gospel stirring up his pillow, and composing himself to rest; methinks I hear him singing his pleasing requiem to his soul; "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years:" but before he was warm in his bed, or his song well ended, behold, there comes a voice from Heaven, saying, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." But I need not have gone so far for instances of this nature; but I dare appeal to your own knowledge and experience in this case; there being none of you but have frequently already, and may still hear each day of such examples as these are. From whence you cannot but conclude, the world, and all the glory of it, to be but a mere piece of pageantry that is still passing away from one to another, and presently is out of sight: all things upon earth being in continual motion, constant in nothing but inconstancy.

Now put these things together, and seriously consider with yourselves, how mean and base, how vain and empty, how troublesome and vexatious, how impertinent and unnecessary, how fleeting and unconstant, all things upon earth are, and then tell me, whether you really think them worthy of your affections? or that it is worth your while to spend your time in the eager prosecution of them? I know, if you will but consult your severer judgments, you cannot but look upon all things here below as beneath you to look upon; as things that deserve not your serious thoughts, much less your time and strength to be spent upon them: and therefore I hope I need not use any more arguments to persuade you to call in for your affections from all things here below: however, give me leave to mind you of the

Colos. 3. 5.

Phil. 3. 18,  
19.

Apostle's saying, that "Covetousness is idolatry;" and that "whosoever minds earthly things, is a shame to the Gospel, and an enemy to the cross of Christ;" and, by consequence, in setting your affections upon them, you thwart God's intentions in giving of them; Who gave them not but that you should improve them for His glory. And, therefore, have a care lest your table become a snare, and your earthly wealth an occasion of your eternal ruin: have a care lest in

catching at the shadow, you lose the substance, and exchange your future happiness for present misery: and, for that end, be sure to “set your affections on things above, and not on things upon the earth.”

2. But it is not enough that your affections be not upon the things that are upon earth, unless they be upon those things that are in Heaven. And, therefore, it is this which the Apostle puts here in the first place, the other signifying nothing without this: for, as it avails us nothing to take off our affection from some things here below, unless we take them off from all, so neither will it avail us any thing though we take off our affections from all things here below, unless we set them all upon those things that are above. But this is one of the hardest tasks that a Christian hath to do; but it is that which, unless a man doth do, he is no Christian: this being the specifical difference betwixt a Christian and another man, that the one lives by sense, and not by faith; the other by faith, and not by sense: and, therefore, the one minds earth only, and not Heaven; the other minds Heaven only, and not earth. And, therefore, if you desire not to play with religion, as the generality of people do, but to be Christians indeed, real Saints, such as Christ will accept of when you come into another world, then you must resolve without any more ado, not only to leave doting upon the things which are below, but to perform the whole that is here enjoined, even “to set your affections upon things above,” as well as “not on things on earth.”

For the opening whereof, we shall first consider the reasons why our affections should be in Heaven? And then, what affections should be there?

1. Why should our affections be upon those things that are above? All the reason in the world for it; because there is nothing made or designed as a proper object for your affections, but only the things that are in Heaven: especially if you look upon yourselves as Christians, you must needs grant that Heaven is the only place where your thoughts and affections should always dwell; for where should your affections be, but where your relations are, and your hearts, but where your treasure is? But are you Christians? then,



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Gal. 4. 26.

Rom. 8. 29.

John 20. 17.

[Heb. 12.  
23.]

1. Your relations are such as are in Heaven: there is your Father, that begat you to a new life, and continually provideth for you; there is that "Hierusalem that is above, which is the mother of us all;" there are all our brethren the Saints of the living God; yea, our Elder Brother Himself, even Jesus Christ, Who is called "the First-born among many brethren;" for thither it was that He ascended when He left these lower regions of the world: "I ascend," saith He, "unto My Father and your Father; and to My God and your God." There He hath been ever since, and still is, preparing a place for us, as He did for them which are already with Him. There are the ancient Patriarchs, Prophets and Apostles: there are all Martyrs and Saints of God, even all that ever lived and died in the faith of Christ, they are now in Heaven, with one heart and voice singing forth the praises of the Most High God, and of the Lamb that sitteth upon the throne for evermore. And, amongst the rest, thou mayest have a father or mother, a husband or wife, a son or a daughter, or some very near of kin unto thee, now divested of those other relations, and having taken upon them that of brotherhood. These, and ten thousand times ten thousand more, are now in Heaven, there solacing themselves in the enjoyment of the chiefest good, whilst we, their younger brethren, not being yet fully come to age, are still in this lower world, grappling with its lusts, and striving against the temptations of it. But, howsoever, though our Father Which is in Heaven doth not yet see good to admit us into that blessed society "of the spirits of just men made perfect," not being as yet fitted and qualified sufficiently for it; yet it is His will and pleasure that our hearts be amongst them, although our persons cannot; and that we still be thinking of them, and longing to come unto them, and to be made partakers with them of their celestial glories. In short, our affections should be with them in Heaven, even whilst our bodies are upon the earth, so as to be every moment preparing ourselves for that blessed time when we shall bid adieu to all things upon earth, and go up to take possession of our inheritance in Heaven.

2. As you are Christians, not only your relations, but your possessions too, are only in Heaven; neither is there

any thing upon earth that is worth the owning in itself, much less in comparison of what is reserved for you in Heaven. But here, I hope, I need not spend much time in shewing you, that a Christian's treasure is only in Heaven; for are you Christians, and yet look for your treasures here? Do you think that the heirs of God, and co-heirs with Jesus Christ, have their portion only in this life? or that Christ came from Heaven only that you might live pleasantly upon earth? and was reproached and despised only that you might be honoured and applauded by men? I dare say there is none of you hath such mean thoughts of Christ as these are, expecting nothing less than true, real, solid and eternal happiness from Him. I know also you would not willingly have your portion in this life; but whatsoever your present estates are, you desire better and greater in the world to come, even the same which Christ hath purchased with His Own most precious blood; and which our brethren that are gone before, are already invested with in the highest Heavens, where they behold God face to face, and enjoy all those infinite and enamouring perfections which are concentrated in Him, which God intended at first as the only object of our felicity. And if these do not, what can deserve your affections from you?

3. And so I come to the next thing proposed, and that is, what are those affections which we ought to set upon the things that are above? For the understanding of which, give me leave to call to your minds the extent and latitude of the word *φρονεῖτε*, here used in my text, which, as I told you, hath respect to both the chief faculties of the soul, the understanding and the will. And so when we are commanded to "set our affections on things above," it is not to be understood only of the acts of the understanding, which we call consideration, meditation, and the like, but likewise of the several motions of the will, which come under the name of passions or affections. Now there being a double object for the will of man to work upon, good and evil, there is likewise a double faculty considerable in it; the one we call a concupiscible, the other an irascible faculty; by the one we follow that which is good, by the other we run from that which is evil. Now there being nothing above of evil,

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there is nothing there for our irascible passions to do, or work upon; and so grief, hatred, fear, and such like passions or affections, are excluded from the number of those, which we ought to set upon things above. But good being there in its beauty and perfection, the other affections, whereby the will embraceth what is good, are chiefly to be exercised, and in the highest pitch and degree that they can possibly be raised to. Now the first act which the will puts forth to that which is presented to it under the notion of good, is that affection which we commonly call love; which is indeed the fountain of all the other affections, and streams itself into them, according to the several circumstances which the object may lie under. As, for example; if what we apprehend to be good, be present with us, then the affection of love embraceth it with joy; if absent from us, it issues forth itself into desire; but if the distance be still greater, yet so that it is attainable, it puts forth itself into hope. Which things being thus premised, it is easy to shew what affections are to be placed upon “those things that are above.”

Psalm 1. 2.

1. For, first, if we consider the word as it respects the understanding, so it imports, that our thoughts and meditations are principally to be taken up with the affairs of the world to come, and with those transcendent glories which are above; so that your more serious thoughts are still to be spent upon those most serious things. Thus David describes a good man by his “delighting in the law of the Lord,” and meditating in that law both day and night; implying, that his great care is how to get to Heaven. And therefore, whilst others are busying themselves about the impertinences of this transient life, the soul that is truly pious employs its thoughts and studies about the happiness of Heaven, and the way that leads unto it; his body may be with his friends below, but his head and his heart are with his God above. And if any of you desire to manifest yourselves to be Christians indeed, you must not look at, or mind the things that are seen, but those things that are not seen; as knowing that “the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” You must not suffer your thoughts to creep any longer upon this

2Cor. 4. 18.

dunghill earth, but refine your drossy, and raise up your drowsy, spirits to behold, contemplate, and admire the glories that are in Heaven. For which end it is necessary that you often retire from the cares and bustles of this tumultuous world, and bid your earthly thoughts farewell, commanding them to stay below, while your aspiring souls go up to take a view of what is above; where, having fixed yourselves amongst the choir of Saints and Angels, cast your rolling eyes about, and take an exact survey of the land of Canaan that flows with milk and honey. Look well that you cannot but behold such transcendent light and glory, that your eyes will be dazzled, and your hearts astonished at it. And if you do but listen with an attentive and believing ear, you cannot but hear such melodious music and celestial concert, as will be sure to ravish and transport your spirits beyond themselves. And do but rightly weigh and consider what is there, and you will find that there is not only the blessed company of the spirits of just men made perfect, together with Angels, Archangels, Cherubims, and Seraphims, with the rest of the celestial hierarchy, but there is Christ and God Himself; Whom to know, is the only wisdom; Whom to serve, is the only freedom; and Whom to enjoy, is the only happiness that any creature is capable of. And who would not dwell in the ravishing contemplations of such rare perfections as these?

In the next place, when your heads are thus got into Heaven amongst those things that are above, you must be sure to send your hearts after them. I mean the affection of love, which cannot but be inflamed with beholding such transcendent beauty and glory as that is. And therefore, do but seriously bethink and consider with yourselves what really there is, and you cannot but love to be in Heaven: there is the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the Cause of all causes, the Best of all goods, and the Centre of all perfections: there is Wisdom and Power, Justice and Mercy, Grace and Goodness, Love and Purity, Glory and Eternity altogether: there is He that made you, He that preserveth you, and He that redeemed you too: there is He that left the sweetness of His Father's bosom, and all to come and die for you: there is He that laid down His Own life to ransom yours,



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and died in time that you might live for ever : there is He that gave His body to be broken that you might eat it, and His blood to be shed that you might mystically drink of it : there is He that mourned, that you might rejoice ; and became miserable to make you happy : there is He that easeth you of all your dolorous complaints, and cures you of all your mournful sadness ; that supplies your wants, dispels your fears, and averts your danger from the wrath of an incensed God. In short, there is Christ now making intercession for your souls in Heaven, as He once made satisfaction for your sins on earth. And whilst I am speaking, and you thinking, I hope, upon these things, do not your hearts wax hot within you ? While you are thus musing, doth not the fire kindle ? Are not your hearts even snatched from you, and your souls transported into flames of love ? Certainly, if they be not, it is because they are not in Heaven, and you do not rightly consider what is there ; which I am confident none can do, but he must needs be in love with what he there beholds ; these things being the only objects which our love was made to be placed upon.

3. In the next place, having your affection of love fixed upon those glories that are above, I need not tell you, that your desires must be carried after them. For as you cannot behold them without loving, so you cannot love them without desiring of them ; they being so infinitely lovely in themselves, and yet for the present at some distance from us, which should make us long and thirst after nothing in the world so much as to come nearer and nearer to them, until at length we come into the full enjoyment of them. For if the dark glimpses and transient glances of Heaven's glory be so strangely ravishing, what will the clear vision be ? If the very believing of it fill us, as the Apostle saith,

[1 Pet. 1.8.]

“ with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” what shall we think of the full possession of it ? Even that it is infinitely more than we are able to think of. The consideration whereof should make us, methinks, even forget the world and all things in it, and desire nothing but to get to Heaven. Thus St. Paul, when he had been rapt up into the third Heavens, and had heard and seen something of what is there done, what was his life after but a continued breath-

ing out, *Cupio dissolvi*, "I desire to be dissolved and to be [Phil. 1. 23.] with Christ." Thus David, having once tasted a little of "those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore," how pathetically doth he after cry out, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God." And you, and I, who are so apt to be overwhelmed with cares and fears, and always subject to sin and vanity, could we but now and then, in our aspiring and believing thoughts, get up to Heaven, and there contemplate those eternal mansions, which Christ Himself hath purchased, and is now preparing for us, we should soon be weary of this deceitful world, and desire to be taken from it: we should soon join with the sweet singer of Israel, and say, "Oh, that [Ps. 16. 11; 36. 8.] I had wings like a dove, for then I would fly away, and be at rest;" then would I mount above the stars themselves, and there my soul should rest, and take its fill of joy and pleasure in the enjoyment of the chiefest good. And verily, until your desires be in some measure thus carried after the joys of Heaven, you are not only far from performing the duty in my text, but you are as yet far from true piety and religion; which cannot consist without real and sincere desires of serving God on earth and enjoying Him in Heaven. [Ps. 42. 1, 2.]

But, you may say, Heaven is a great way off, and you know not how long it may be before you can get to it, and therefore, what need we trouble ourselves so much about it yet? To that I answer, It is true indeed, Heaven is a great way off from you that dwell on earth: but, howsoever, although it be above your sight, it is not above your hope. And, therefore, in the next place, that affection of hope should fix itself in Heaven, even whilst we are on earth; which is the only time wherein we can exert this grace: for when we come to Heaven, as our faith will be turned into vision, so will our hope be swallowed up of fruition. And, indeed, as there is nothing so worthy of our love, so neither is there any thing that we have such grounds to hope for, as the things that are above: for we have no ground to hope for any thing here below, because we have no promise [Rom. 8. 24.]

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John 3. 16.

for it. But that all those that repent and believe the Gospel shall go to Heaven, we have the infallible word and promise of God, "Who so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And what ground can we have in the world whereon to anchor our hopes, firmer or so firm as this is? And, therefore, we have no cause to despond or despair of it. Let us but repent of our former sins, and for the future fear God and keep His Commandments, believing in Jesus Christ for the acceptance both of our persons and duties, and then we cannot miss of the glories which we have now been speaking of. And, therefore, while some hope for riches, others for the honours of this world, while some hope to live pleasantly, others to live long upon earth, let us hope, in and through Christ, to live eternally in Heaven, yea, so as to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Rom. 5. 2.

And so I come to the last affection which is to be set upon the things above, even our joy, which you must not suffer to be crawling upon earth, whilst the others are soaring aloft in Heaven; where, and where alone, the proper objects of our joy are. But, supposing your other affections to be placed upon those things that are above, it is impossible for you not to rejoice in them: yea, the very thoughts of your having such transcendent glory purchased and prepared for you, cannot but be extraordinarily pleasing and delightful to you. And although you have not as yet, nor can see

[1 Cor. 13.  
12.]  
1 Pet. 1. 8.

them, but as "through a glass darkly," yet "believing in them you cannot but rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Nay, more than that, the self-same joy which the Angels have, and you expect in Heaven, the same you are bound in duty to solace yourselves in whilst you are here below. For, Whom do the Angels and glorified Saints rejoice in, but only in the living God? In Whom you are commanded to rejoice here as well as there; "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice;" so that we are bound to rejoice in the Lord always, when we have, and when we have not any thing else to rejoice in; so as always to say with the Prophet, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive

Phil. 4. 4.

Hab. 3. 17,  
18.

shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall ; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation." And so we may say, moreover ; although all things upon earth do frown upon me, and my very friends be turned against me, although my estate fail me, and all my honours be taken from me, although my health and strength decay, and I have nothing in this world to help me, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and solace myself, and comfort my heart with the believing thoughts of that eternal happiness, which ere long shall be conferred upon me.

Thus having shewn you how you ought to set your affections upon those things that are above, so as always to be thinking of them, with love unto them, thirsting after them, hoping for them, and rejoicing in them ; I should now come to apply what I have said, but that I hope you have done it to my hands : being now so thoroughly persuaded of the excellency of these things that are above, beyond whatsoever is here below, that you are already resolved within yourselves to call in all your scattered affections from all things here below, wherein they have hitherto been entangled, and to centre them all in Heaven, and in that perfection of glory and happiness, which is there, and only there, to be enjoyed. Which if you were truly resolved upon, and by the assistance of God would perform such resolutions, what holy lives would you then lead, and what happy creatures would you then be ! The world would then be no snare unto you, nor its pomps and vanities entice you to sin : for your eyes would be so much dazzled with beholding the glory of Heaven, that every thing else would seem but blackness and darkness to you. The pleasures of this world would soon seem brutish, its honours despicable, and its riches so poor and mean, that they deserve to be the object rather of our scorn than covetousness ; and so disdaining to be so low-spirited as to mind or regard such childish trifles, and throw away our precious and short-lived days upon such impertinent and tormenting vanities as all things are which are here below, we should rather devote ourselves to serving God, and please ourselves in pleasing Him.

And as this would be the way to become holy, so would



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it lead us to be happy too; not only because grace and glory, holiness and happiness, attend each other, but likewise in that our very happiness itself consists in the performing this one duty, even in setting our affections upon things above, and not on those things which are upon the earth. For all the misery and trouble that befalls us here, ariseth only from our affections being placed here. For if you did not love and desire the world, you would neither be proud that you have it, nor sorry when you lose it; your hearts not being set upon it, they would not be troubled for parting with it.

And, therefore, let things fall how they will, your love and joy being only in Heaven, nothing upon earth can deprive you of it. Wherefore, as ever any of you desire to know what it is to be free from misery, or to be truly happy, set upon the performance of this duty; “set your affections on things above, and not on things upon the earth:” which could we all do, what happy souls should we then be! How should we laugh to see poor silly mortals trudging up and down the world encompassing both sea and land to search for happiness, and cannot find it; whilst we enjoy it in our own breasts, by having our affections placed upon God, and the things above. And whilst others trouble and torment themselves with needless fears and jealousies about future events, “our hearts would be fixed, trusting in the Lord:” whatsoever storms and tempests arise without us, there would still be calmness and tranquillity within; whatsoever happens in the world, to the grief and trouble of them that love it, would not touch or reach us, whose minds, whose thoughts, whose hearts, whose affections, are all above it. By this means we should live in Heaven whilst we are on earth, maugre all the opposition that men or devils can make against us. And it is not long but where our hearts now are, our souls shall be, even in the highest Heavens, rejoicing in the enjoyment of the Chiefest Good, and singing forth His praises for evermore.

[Psal. 112.  
7.]

## SERMON CXXXVIII.

OF KEEPING OUR HEARTS.

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PROV. iv. 23.

*Keep thy heart with all diligence ; for out of it are the issues of life.*

As it is with the slaves in Turkey, and elsewhere, if they beget any children, they are born subject to the same slavery and bondage that their parents live in ; so is it with all mankind. Our first parents being overcome and carried captive by the Devil, and sold under sin, all their posterity are born slaves and captives to sin and Satan : to sin that reigns and domineers over them, so that all the faculties of their souls, and members of their bodies, are in perpetual bondage and subjection of it ; what that bids them think, or speak, or do, that they readily perform, without so much as resisting or opposing its commands : and if they be servants to sin, they cannot but be so to Satan too, being taken captive by him at his will. This being the sad and wretched estate of all mankind by nature, the Son of God Himself, out of His infinite love and compassion towards us, was pleased to lay down His Own life, to ransom and redeem us from this spiritual thralldom and slavery. And He hath paid so great and acceptable a price for our release and freedom, that every one that is willing and desirous to have it, may most certainly attain unto it. It is true, if a man hath that love and affection for his sins, that he had rather continue in their service than to be freed from it, such a one

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Exod. 21. 6. deserves to have his ear bored through, so as to remain a slave for ever; as it was ordained in the law of Moses, concerning servants, so here: the coming of Christ is as the year of release, wherein God is pleased to proclaim liberty to captive sinners. Now they that prefer their chains before their liberty, are justly condemned to perpetual drudgery: but such as, being weary of the service of sin, and desiring to be released from it, betake themselves to Christ, and accept of the terms that He hath propounded for their releasement, such He will surely give rest and freedom to; Isa. 61. 1, 2. and “if the Son make them free, they shall be free indeed;” Matt. 11. 28. that is, they shall be really freed from the power and tyranny of sin, so that it shall not any longer have dominion over John 8. 36. them, “because they are not under the Law, but under Rom. 6. 14. Grace;” it shall not “reign any longer in their mortal ver. 12. bodies, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof.”

Now, our blessed Saviour having at so dear a rate procured this releasement for us, so that, if it be not our own faults, we may all be actually possessed of it; it must needs be our interest and concern to mind it, and to use all means necessary to the actual enjoyment of it. And therefore, He having already purchased it for us, and being still both willing and ready to assist us in the prosecution of it, it must be our principal care and study to weaken the power and dominion of sin in us, and for that end to avoid, as much as we can, the actual commission of all sin, still trusting in, and depending upon Christ, for His assistance of us in so good and acceptable a work as this is: which, if we do, we cannot question but He will be always ready to aid and assist us, by the influence of His grace and Spirit. So that, although we cannot do it effectually by our own strength, yet if we do but what we can ourselves, He will be sure to enable us to live like Saints indeed; so as not to indulge or allow ourselves in any one sin whatsoever, nor do any thing wilfully which we know to be offensive and displeasing unto God.

Well then, seeing Christ hath done so great things for us, that now there is none of us but by His assistance may mortify and subdue the strongest sin or corruption that hitherto hath reigned in us, so as for the future not to obey

it in the lusts thereof; let us therefore, in His Name, set ourselves in good earnest against our sins, and resolve to use all means imaginable to keep them under, that so, while others content themselves with professing the Name of Christ, we may be Christians or Saints in deed and truth, and manifest ourselves to be so both to God, to men, and our own consciences, by conforming our lives and actions wholly to the laws and commands of God.

For which end I know nothing more necessary to be observed than what the wise man prescribes in the words I have now read, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life:" for could you but do this, even keep your hearts aright, you would soon restrain the prevalency of sin, and alter the whole course of your life and conversation for the better, so as to keep yourselves unspotted from the world, and free from the wilful commission of any known sin; as I shall shew in the sequel of this discourse.

In order whereunto, I desire you to observe, that these words do naturally divide themselves into two parts; here is the wise man's counsel or advice, and then the reason of it: his counsel is, to "keep thy heart with all diligence;" and the reason is, "for out of it are the issues of life."

The first part contains not only wholesome, but very necessary advice, which every holy and good man cannot but observe; for without observing of this, he cannot be a holy and good man. For he that doth not diligently keep his own heart, can neither be secure from falling into gross sins, nor yet be fitted for the due performance of any holy duty. So that this advice is not given only to some particular person, or persons, in the world; but all men, of whatsoever rank, or age, or temper, or condition, they be, are equally concerned to receive and follow this counsel, even to "keep their hearts with all diligence;" which, notwithstanding, no man can do, unless he first knows what it is to do so: and therefore, I shall endeavour to unfold unto you the true meaning and purport of this divine counsel, or admonition, as clearly as I can. And for that end shall search into the true notion and sense of each expression in it. Considering,



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1st. The subject, "the heart."

2dly. The act, "keep thy heart."

3dly. The manner of doing it, "with all diligence."

I. The first thing to be considered is the subject, "the heart;" which sometimes in Scripture is put for the material heart, the seat of natural life, the *primum vivens*, and *ultimum moriens*: yet it is more usually put for the immaterial and spiritual part of man, even his soul; which, though philosophers generally assert it to reside principally in the head, the Scriptures make the heart to be the chief seat of it, where it exercises its power, and exerts its several operations: and therefore the heart in Scripture is used for all the faculties of the soul; for the understanding, for the memory, for the conscience, for the will and affections: as, Luke 2. 19. "the Lord opened her heart;" that is, moved her will, and 1 Sam. 24. 5. inclined her affections to embrace the truth she heard. 1 John 3. 20. Acts 16. 14.

And as the heart in Scripture dialect thus sometimes signifies one, sometimes another faculty or operation of the soul; so is it frequently put for the whole soul, and for all its powers and faculties together. And so it is to be understood in my text, of the mind, the thoughts, the conscience, the will, and all the several motions and affections of the soul, whereof the heart is the chief seat or chamber where they reside; or, if you will, the shop where they are framed and fashioned by the soul. And therefore, this advice of the wise man, "to keep our hearts," intimates to us, that we are not to look only to the outward actions of our lives, to varnish and adorn them with the specious shows of piety and religion. Though this be all that the ordinary professors of religion do, who take a great care to avoid all gross and scandalous crimes, or at least so to hide and palliate them, that the world may take no notice of them; but in the meanwhile indulge themselves in any secret and heart sins, as covetousness, envy, malice, uncharitableness, hypocrisy, mistrust of God, and the like; as if such as these are, were not altogether as dangerous and damnable as the most atrocious and horrid vices that the most debauched person in the world can be guilty of. This, therefore, is that which the wise man here would have us to beware of, even to look to our inward, as well as our outward man;

Matt. 12. 35.  
Prov. 23. 26.

not only to keep our hands from picking and stealing, and our tongues from lying and swearing; not only to keep the members of our bodies from the actual commission of any known sin, but to keep our hearts too, and all the faculties of our souls, in the proper frame and disposition which they ought to be always in.

II. And that is the second thing to be here considered, the act to be exerted upon this subject; “Keep thy heart.” But the heart signifying, as I have shewn, the whole inner man; the keeping of the heart cannot possibly signify any thing else but the preserving the several faculties and inward motions also of the soul in their due order, so as to correspond with the rules laid down for them in the Holy Scripture.

In order, therefore, to your right understanding what it is to keep your hearts, I shall shew you, by piece-meal, how you ought to keep every thing that is in them.

1. First, therefore, for your thoughts; the first and most immediate acts of the soul: them you must be sure to keep steady, and fixed upon their right and proper objects, and so pure and clean in themselves. You cannot but be all sensible how nimble, how active, how busy and restless your thoughts are, continually frisking about from one object to another, and from one place to another, how far or distant soever they be asunder; sometimes wandering as far as France, or Spain, or Turkey, anywhere where a man hath ever been, and then presently at home again, in your shops or houses; now soaring aloft in heaven, and in the twinkling of an eye got down to earth again, there roving about from sin to sin, from one vain object to another. So it hath been all along, and so it is still with all men by nature. Their thoughts are not only evil, but they are nothing else but evil; and that too not only now and then, but continually, at all times, in all places, in all companies, in all employments, even sacred as well as civil: yea, commonly, vain, impertinent, and sinful thoughts, are more apt to crowd themselves into men’s minds in the performance of religious duties, than at other times. How many places have your thoughts been in, how many employments have they been busy about, since you came into God’s presence! How justly may God complain of us, as He did of His people

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Ezek. 33. 31.

Israel. Their hearts, that is, their thoughts, are running upon their trades, their shops, their farms, their merchandise, their estates, and every thing they are covetous and desirous of, even upon any thing rather than the work they are about. Thus it is continually in our very approaches unto God; how much more at other times! But this must not be if you desire to be truly holy; you must bridle your very thoughts, and keep them within their bounds, or else you are never likely either to be or do good. Whatsoever duty you perform, you must keep your hearts and thoughts close unto it, or at least do what you can to do so, otherwise it can never be acceptable unto God. And at all other times, you must watch and guard your fancy and imaginations, that they may not spend themselves upon foolish and impertinent, much less upon vicious and sinful objects: but keep them in that order and discipline, that they may march in rank and file, regularly and directly, towards such things as they were at first made and designed to be fixed upon: as the perfections of God, the merits of Jesus Christ, the excellency of holiness, the sinfulness of sin, the vanity of the world, the glory of Heaven, the miseries of hell, and suchlike objects as tend to the deterring you from vice, and the alluring of you to the exercise of grace and virtue. This is the only way to keep your hearts clean and free from worldly, lascivious, uncharitable, malicious, revengeful, proud, and ambitious thoughts, which otherwise will certainly infest and defile you. For do what you can, your agile thoughts will be running upon something or other; and if you do not watch them narrowly and keep them fixed upon proper and good objects, they will fly out, and light upon what is sinful and mischievous.

2. As you must keep your thoughts always pure and clean, so you must be sure to keep your judgments sound and orthodox. Where, by your judgments, I mean your settled thoughts concerning particular truths or falsehood; which is a thing that we must have an especial care of, so as not to think that to be true which is false, nor yet that false which is true; for every such thought is erroneous, and by consequence sinful. I confess an orthodox faith can never bring us to Heaven without a holy life; but so nei-

ther can a holy life do it, without an orthodox faith; for heresies are damnable, as well as sins. And the reason is, <sup>2 Pet. 2. 1.</sup> because heresies are as much against the assertions, as sin is against the command, of God, revealed in Scripture. Hence our Saviour speaks of false prophets, which should teach such doctrines, and back them with such “signs and won- <sup>Matt. 24. 24.</sup> ders, as, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect.” A place much to be observed: for it plainly shews, that there are such doctrines and opinions held and taught by some, which will certainly ruin and destroy them which believe or espouse them. For, it seems, it is impossible for “the elect” to be deceived with them, because if they were, they could not be saved: and therefore, it is not so indifferent a thing, as some would make it, what opinion a man is of: for it seems a man may be damned for his evil opinions, as well as his evil practices; insomuch, that heresies <sup>Gal. 5. 20, 21.</sup> are reckoned among the grossest sins; a necessary caution for this age, wherein there have been more errors and heresies broached by some, and swallowed down by others, than in any other age since the world began. But as you tender your eternal Salvation have a care of them: “be not tossed <sup>[Eph. 4. 14.]</sup> to and fro with every wind of doctrine:” have a care of new doctrines and opinions, started up in these latter days: but keep close to the articles and principles of religion established in our Church: which are all grounded upon Scripture, consonant to reason, and agreeable to the doctrine of the primitive Christians, as may be easily demonstrated. But whatsoever is new, beware of it upon that very account, because it is new, following the Apostle’s advice to Timothy, “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, <sup>1 Tim. 6. 20</sup> avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of <sup>21.</sup> science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith.”

3. Keep your consciences “void of offence towards God <sup>Acts 24. 16</sup> and man.” Be sure to avoid whatsoever may defile or offend these, as be sure every sin doth. For which end you must also keep your consciences always awake, that they may duly perform their office, in excusing, or else in accusing of you, according to your merit or demerit. Above all things have a care they be not galled with a heavy sin;



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2 Cor. 1. 12.

but that their testimony may afford you matter of comfort and rejoicing, rather than of trouble and remorse.

Deut. 8. 18;  
Eccles. 12. 1;  
Jer. 2. 32.  
Mal. 4. 4.  
Ezek. 16. 61.  
63.  
Luke 22. 19.

4. You must keep your memories faithful and retentive of the best things, and such as are most necessary and advantageous for you; though no man can remember all things, all men can remember some things: there is no man so forgetful but he can remember his bills, his bonds, and all his concerns in this life. And these are generally the only objects that men exercise their memories about; making their memories the storehouse only of their temporal affairs. But he that would keep his heart aright, must lay up better things in it, than what this world can afford him. Thus you are commanded to remember the Lord your God; and to remember His Law; your sins; and Christ, for which the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is ordained. And he that doth not keep those and suchlike things fresh in his mind and memory, can never be said to keep his heart aright.

1 John 2. 15.  
Col. 3. 2.

5. To the keeping of your hearts aright, it is required that you keep a strict watch over your wills, and their several motions or inclinations, which we usually call passions or affections: you must not suffer them to be entangled amongst the briars and thorns, the vexatious trifles and tormenting vanities of this lower world, but you must keep them aloft, soaring amongst the transcendent glories that are above. Your love, your desire, your hope, your joy, must be all fixed only upon God, the chiefest good; your hatred, your abhorrence, your grief, your anger, must be exercised only upon sin, the worst of all evils. These are the proper objects of your several passions: and therefore, as you must not love or desire any thing so much as God, so neither must you hate or abhor any thing in the world but sin. As for the things of this life, you must keep your affections in an equal poise towards them; neither too much overjoyed at the having of them, nor over-grieved at the parting with them: keeping your hearts loose and indifferent as to all things here below, fixed only upon God and the things above.

Thus, therefore, it is that you are to keep your hearts, your whole hearts, in a right frame and temper: you must

keep your thoughts clean and pure, your judgments sound and orthodox, your consciences clear and void of all offence, your memories stored with the best things, and your affections placed upon their proper objects.

III. Thus much may suffice for the art of keeping the heart. The next thing to be considered is the manner of its performance; it is to be kept with all diligence. In the Hebrew it is *מכל משמר* 'Above all keeping, keep thy heart:' have a greater care of that than of all things else. There are many things in the world that men are very careful to keep, as their money, their writings, their credit, their friends, their jewels, their liberty, their privileges, their health, their strength, their life, and the like: what care do men take to keep these things! And yet if we will take the wise man's counsel, our heart is to be kept more carefully than any of them all, yea, than all of them: for it is "to be kept with all diligence," or above all other keeping, with the best, the safest, the surest way of keeping imaginable; so as not only to look to it now and then, but to have our eye continually upon it, and always to set a strict watch and guard about it. And verily, all things considered, we have all the reason in the world to do so.

1. For, first, the heart of man is certainly the most deceitful thing in nature, for "it is deceitful above all things." Jer. 17. 9. There is no person or thing in the world that puts so many tricks upon men, and cheats them so egregiously as their own hearts do. What lies and falsehoods do they continually tell you! If you be but a little sorry for your sins, your hearts tell you, this is repentance. If you do but believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, your hearts tell you, this is faith. And if you have but any thing like to grace or virtue, your hearts presently tell you, they are really so. How many have been thus cheated into everlasting flames by their own fraudulent and deceitful hearts! And therefore the wise man might well say, "He that Prov. 28. 26. trusteth in his own heart is a fool." For you will all acknowledge him to be a fool, with a witness, that will trust a known cheat; yet such is every man's heart by nature; such a cheat that it cannot but cheat him; it would act contrary to its own nature if it did not. And therefore it

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must needs concern us to look very narrowly to it, and to deal with it as we would do with a common cheat, or a treacherous, pilfering, and deceitful servant, even always to have a jealous and watchful eye over it: for if our eye be never so little off, it will do us some mischief, and betray us into some danger or other. And seeing our own hearts are so apt to deceive and impose upon us, we had need to keep a very strict hand over them; and they being deceitful above all things, above all things we must be sure to keep them.

2. The heart had need be kept with all diligence, because of the many and great dangers it is encompassed with on every side; it lies in the midst of snares, wherewith it is continually subject to be entangled. As there is treachery within, so without there are many enemies that always labour to assault and batter it; especially it hath two very potent, vigilant, and indefatigable adversaries, and they are the world and the Devil.

1. For the world; that lays close siege about it, and plants three very great and dangerous engines against it, earthly riches, carnal pleasures, and popular applause. Whereof the first, even the wealth and riches of this world, is commonly so powerful and prevalent upon mankind, that the Devil thought to have surprised our Saviour Himself with it; for which end he reserved it for his last assault, as thinking this would do, though nothing else would. But although our Saviour's heart was so rarely tempered, so perfectly inclined to God and goodness, that all the riches and glories of this world could make no impression at all upon it; it is not so with us, whose hearts are so corrupt and depraved with sin, and so inclined to the things of this world, that the very name of riches will not only entice them into evil, but rob them of whatsoever is good and commendable in them, as our Saviour intimates. Neither are the pleasures of this world less powerful and prevalent over our corrupt hearts, than its wealth and riches; inso-much that whatsoever is pleasing to the flesh, usually draws all the powers of the soul after it. Whence our Saviour chargeth us to have an especial care that we be not overtaken with them; yea, so foolish and fickle a thing is the

Matt. 4. 8,  
9.

Matt. 13. 22.

Luke 21. 34.

heart of man become, that it is apt to be drawn aside and aliened from God and real happiness, with the very breath of men's mouths; every blast of popular air is strong enough to make it reel and stagger, if not fall down before it. The very empty titles of honour, which have no subsistence but what men's deluded fancies give them, even they too often puff up the heart with pride and self-conceit, and so lay it waste and destitute of every thing that is truly good. And our hearts being thus liable to be ensnared with such envenomed baits as these are, which the world continually lays before them, we had need to have the greater care to keep them with all the diligence imaginable.

Especially considering that our old malicious and inveterate enemy, the Devil, joins his forces with the world, and wields its weapons with his cunning and powerful hand. If a single temptation will not seize upon the heart, he is always ready to second and reinforce it, using all the skill and power he hath to get possession of the heart, that he may exercise his tyranny and dominion over it: and if he cannot take it by force, he will endeavour to surprise it by fraud. So that by one means or other the heart of man is continually subject to be overcome and carried away captive by him; which it will most certainly be, unless it be kept and guarded with all the care and vigilancy that possibly can be used about it; upon which account the Apostle <sup>1</sup> Pet. 5. 8. adviseth us to watch it narrowly.

Seeing, therefore, the heart of man is so treacherous and deceitful in itself, and likewise so apt to be betrayed and deceived by others, even by the world and the Devil, it must needs behove us to keep it with all diligence. Especially considering, in the last place, the reason which the wise man here gives of his counsel or advice, "keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." I shall not trouble you with the various expositions that learned men have put upon these words: the natural and genuine sense of them is plainly this, that all the actions of a man's life issue or proceed from the heart, which is the fountain not only of our natural life, but likewise of our moral too. So that as a man's heart is, so will his life be. If his heart be kept clean and pure, his life cannot be



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Matt. 7. 16,  
17.  
ch. 12. 34,  
35.

wicked or vicious; and if his heart be wicked or vicious, his life cannot be kept clean and pure from sin; as our Saviour Himself teacheth. And what our Saviour there taught, is attested by reason and daily experience, even that all the actions of a man's life, good or bad, flow from his heart.

1. As for sinful actions, it is plain that they are all engendered in the heart; that is the womb that conceives and brings them forth; as the Apostle describing the generation of sin, how it is accomplished *a primo ad ultimum*, he saith, Jam. 1. 15. "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Where, by lust, he means the inward depravity and corruption of our hearts by sin, the actual enormities of our life and conversations: the first conception whereof he ascribes to lust, to our base and corrupt hearts; here they are conceived, and from hence they are brought forth into act; as our Matt. 15. 19. Saviour also sheweth. So that the heart is the root from whence all actual impieties spring, the fountain from whence they flow. All the sins that thou art or canst be guilty of, take their first rise from the disorder and impurity of thy affections, from whence they proceed to corrupt thy fancy and imagination, until at length they break forth into actual rebellion against God. For as the Apostle argues, Jam. 4. 1. "From whence come wars and fightings among you, come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" The same may be said of all other actual sins whatsoever: whence comes all the pride, the cousenage, the oppression, the extortion, the blaspheming of God's Name, the profaning of His Sabbaths, the neglecting of His public Ordinances; whence come these and all other sins, but from your lusts, from the viciousness and corruption of your hearts and natures? The fountain is polluted, and therefore it is no wonder that the streams are so. Your hearts are not right with God, and that is the reason that your actions are so contrary to Him. Neither is it possible for you ever to reform your lives, until your hearts be first reformed. Here all your sins begin, and therefore your reformation must begin here too, or else it can never be carried on to any purpose. From whence you may see

the indispensable necessity of observing the wise man's counsel "in keeping the heart with all diligence," because otherwise all manner of evils issue from it into your lives and conversations.

And as all base and vicious, so likewise all good and virtuous actions proceed from the heart, which is the seat of all true grace and virtue, as well as of sin and vice. If the heart be bad, the life cannot be good; and if the heart be good, the life cannot be bad. And, therefore, as ever you desire to live well, you must love well, and hope well, and desire well, and exercise all the other motions of the heart well. For, as it is in a natural life, so long as the heart is sound and strong, the body is sure to live and perform all vital actions; so is it in our life spiritual; if the heart be clean and pure, the soul is sure to live and perform all spiritual actions aright; for then they will all proceed from truth and sincerity of heart, which is the life of all our devotions and obedience to God, Who "requireth truth Psal. 51. 6. in the inward parts;" that is, such true and sincere obedience which issueth or proceedeth from the heart, from whence are the issues, all the issues and actions of a man's life.

Hence, therefore, as ever you desire either to depart from evil, or to do good, either to avoid sin, or practise holiness, your great care must be to "keep your hearts with all diligence," or "above all other keepings;" for till this be done, it is impossible for you to do either the one or the other.

But the great question is, how this so necessary and important a duty may be performed? And by what means you and I may keep our hearts so, that no wilful sin or impiety, nothing but sincere obedience and virtue may issue from them? A question, which I hope you are all desirous to have resolved. But let me tell you, it is in vain for me to shew you how to do it, unless you resolve beforehand to put it into practice. But I hope you are by this time so sensible of the necessity of it, that you need no more arguments to persuade you to it; only give me leave to premise this unto you, that it is a matter of greater difficulty, as well as necessity, than you are apt to fancy it to be. For our hearts being naturally hard, our minds dark,

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our consciences corrupted, our judgments erroneous, our thoughts unruly, and all our affections out of tune, it cannot but be very hard and difficult indeed to keep them in that order they ought to be. But our comfort is, although it be hard, it is not impossible; yea, there is none of you but may do it, if you would but set yourselves in good earnest upon the use of such means as I shall direct you to, in order to the effecting of it.

First, therefore, if you would keep your heart right, you must be sure to set a very strict watch over all your senses: as those who defend a city besieged or assaulted by an enemy, have a special care of the gates and passages that lead unto it, and set the strongest guards there, as knowing the enemy will strive to enter in that way; so here the senses are the gates or entrances into the heart, it is by them that things ordinarily enter into the mind; and therefore the Devil makes principal use of them, through which to convey his temptations into the hearts of men, presenting them with such sensible objects as may allure the soul to sin and vanity. Indeed there is no sensible object whatsoever but is apt to raise some sinful motion or other in you, either of love or hatred, fear or anger, joy or grief, in an inordinate manner. There are two senses especially that have extraordinary influence upon the soul, the eye, and the ear: as for the eye, David's example may be a warning to the holiest men upon the earth to the world's end. What a troop of barbarous and mischievous sins did one single glance upon naked Bathsheba let into his soul! And

Josh. 7. 21. Achan's example may be so too; who, seeing the Babylonish garment, began to covet it; and from coveting it, went on

Job 31. 1. to downright stealing of it, as you may read. Hence Job made a covenant with his eyes; and so must you do too, if ever you desire to secure your hearts from the many temptations which otherwise will enter in that way. And so for your ears, you must keep them close too, stopped against all wanton and lascivious discourse, which by them inflames the heart with lust and concupiscence: neither must you let them listen to any malicious tales, or lying reports, that may be raised concerning your neighbour, which will either lessen your love unto him, or breed in you any scorn or

contempt of him, and enrage your hearts some way or other against him. These, therefore, and all other senses, which are as inlets into the soul, you must have a great care of; keep them, as we say, under lock and key; if possible, let nothing come in at them, which may any ways disturb or discompose your inward man, and then it will be easy for you to keep your hearts aright.

Secondly; if notwithstanding all the care you take to avoid them, any sinful motions shall happen to arise, as they will sometimes, in your hearts, you must be sure to suppress them at the very first beginning of them; nip them in the bud, crush them at their first appearance, otherwise they will soon grow too strong and prevalent for you. Do not stand parleying with them, but so soon as ever you perceive your thoughts begin to be exorbitant, and to draw you into sin, give not the least consent unto them, but resist and quell them immediately. If you cannot bridle and manage your thoughts so as to keep them always in their proper order, yet you must be sure to keep so strict a hand over your wills and affections that they may not approve or embrace them, but rather throw them out again with an utter abhorrence and detestation. It is an excellent rule prescribed by St. Austin, ‘That the soul accustom itself continually to examine and consider its own thoughts at the first rising:’ *Et ad primum animi motum vel probare, vel reprobare quid cogitat, ut vel bonas cogitationes alat, vel statim extinguat malas.* And he that doth not observe this, can never keep his own heart as he ought to do, but will be always liable to all manner of sins that either the Devil or his own corrupt nature can prompt him to.

Thirdly; But because this is a work too great for you to do by your own strength, you must look out for help, and implore God’s assistance of you in the doing of it. Indeed, prayer is the surest guard that you can set about your hearts: for, as the Psalmist says, “Except the Lord keepeth the city, the watchman waketh in vain.” So here, except the Lord keep your hearts, your watching of them will stand you in no stead; for the heart of man is so desperately wicked, that nothing but the grace and power of Almighty God can keep it within its bounds: but our comfort is, that



SERM. God is as ready to assist us, as we are to desire it of Him.  
 CXXXVIII. And therefore let it be not only our daily but constant prac-  
 Ps. 141.3,4. tice to pray to God to keep our hearts.  
 Matt.26.41.

Fourthly; Let your prayer to God for this purpose be  
 John 15. 5. backed with faith in Jesus Christ, without Whom you can  
 do nothing, as Himself tells you; you cannot pray, nor  
 hear, nor give an alms, nor do any thing else acceptably  
 without Him, much less can you keep your hearts without  
 Him; nor by Him, without faith in Him, which is the means  
 whereby we receive grace and power from Him to make and  
 Acts 15. 9. keep our hearts pure. Indeed, a very historical faith, or  
 full assent to the truths asserted in Scripture, will conduce  
 very much to the keeping our hearts in a holy awe of  
 God, and fear of sin, much more such a faith whereby we  
 Phil. 4, 11, trust in the merits of Jesus Christ for the enabling of us to  
 12, 13. do it.

Lastly; Having thus guarded your hearts with prayer  
 and faith, possess them continually with the apprehensions  
 of God's omnipresence, that His eye always sees, His ear hears  
 Prov. 21. 2. you, His hand registereth the very motions of your hearts,  
 as well as the outward actions of your life. And, therefore,  
 whensoever you find any sinful motions begin to arise in  
 your hearts, check them with this consideration, that the  
 Eternal God takes notice of them; He always observes the  
 Ps. 139. 2. very imaginations of thy heart, and knows thy thoughts  
 afar off. And if the presence of a man, or often of a child,  
 can deter thee from committing lewdness, how much more  
 should the presence of Almighty God Himself do it! Let  
 such thoughts therefore as these are, always dwell in your  
 hearts, and then be sure no sin or lust can lodge there, but  
 you will keep your hearts safe and sound against all assaults  
 that can be made against them.

## SERMON CXXXIX.

OF TAKING UPON US CHRIST'S YOKE.

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MATT. xi. 29.

*Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

ALTHOUGH our blessed Saviour, in the foregoing verse, promiseth rest to "those that labour, and are heavy laden," if they will but come to Him, yet we must not think that they that come to Him shall have nothing to do, or that they shall rest from doing good, as well as from suffering evil. It is true, what Christ hath done and suffered for us, of itself is sufficient to expiate our sins, and to reconcile us unto God. For it was "He that trod the winepress of His Father's wrath alone," no creature being in a capacity to assist Him. And therefore the pardon of our sins, and the acceptance of our persons before God, must be wholly ascribed to the merit of His death and passion; nothing that we can do signifying any thing at all without it. But, howsoever, though Christ thus came to expiate, He did not come to patronise our sins; nor to die for them that we might still live in them. He hath freed us indeed from the curse of the Law, but not from our obedience to it. He hath taken off our obligations to the punishments, but not to our observance of it. For Himself hath told, that "He came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil and establish them." Hence the Apostle having proved that "we

[Is. 63. 3.]  
Matt. 5. 17.  
Rom. 3. 28.

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are justified by faith without the deeds of the Law," he presently adds, "Do we then make void the Law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the Law." Where we may observe, by the way, the great mistake and error of those who contend and assert, that wheresoever St. Paul speaks of "the deeds" or "works of the Law," as having no hand in our justification, he is to be understood only of the Levitical or ceremonial law, not of the moral. But nothing can be clearer than that the Apostle in this place speaks only of the deeds of the moral law, saying, "that we are justified by faith alone without them." For it is plain that he here speaks of that law which faith doth not make void, but establish: whereas it is agreed on all hands, that the ceremonial law is utterly abolished by the coming of Christ, and that it is the moral law only that is established by faith in Him; and by consequence that they are the deeds of the moral, not of the ceremonial law, which the Apostle here excludes from our justification before God, although it be still in force as much as ever, or rather more; we having now more and stronger obligations upon us to observe it, than they had before the coming of Christ: forasmuch as we have now clearer explanations of it, both by the doctrine and example of our blessed Saviour, and also greater encouragements, because

1 Cor. 15. 58. we may be now assured, that how much soever we "abound in the work of the Law, our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord;" yea, and we have a promise of greater assistance now by the Spirit of God Himself, Which Christ will give to them that come to Him; so that we have all the obligations imaginable upon us to love and obey God in whatsoever He commands.

When Christ, therefore, promiseth to give rest to them that come unto Him for it, we must still remember what kind of rest it is; not a rest in, but from, their sins: He will ease them from their former yokes and burdens which they laboured under, and were overladen with; but so that they must take His easy yoke upon them, and His light burden: "take My yoke," saith He, "upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

This, therefore, being that which our blessed Lord, from

Whom we expect both pardon and Salvation, requires of all those that come unto Him, and by consequence that expect any thing from Him, as I hope we all do, it must needs be a matter of very great moment and importance to us all rightly to understand His will and pleasure in these words, and what it is that He requireth of us ; which that you may do, I shall endeavour to explain them to you clearly and distinctly as they lie in order.

I. First, saith He, "Take My yoke upon you." For the opening of which words we must consider what yoke it is that He here speaks of, and how we must take it upon us. As for the first: we must know that there is a threefold yoke of Christ, which all are bound to take upon them that come to Him.

First, the yoke of His doctrine ; what He hath taught we must know and believe, therefore because He hath taught it. It is true, there are many things which Christ hath now revealed, and discovered to us, which mankind before were either altogether ignorant of, or at the best very doubtful in, which they that come to Christ are bound to believe, upon His word or testimony, confirmed by many and real miracles, wrought on purpose for the confirmation of them. As for example, the doctrine of the Trinity, that there are Three Persons in one nature, every one of which is God, and yet all Three but one God: that the Father begat the Son, the Son was begotten of the Father, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from both; and yet one was not before another, nor one greater than another, but all Three of the self-same individual nature, glory, power, majesty; co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal to one another. And the doctrine of the incarnation; that as in the Trinity there be Three Persons in one nature, so in Christ there are two natures in one person, the Divine and human nature, and both in their perfection; so that He was both perfectly God, of the self-same substance with the Father, and like unto Him in all things, His personal properties only excepted; and perfectly man, of the self-same substance with us, and like unto us in all things, our sinful infirmities only excepted. To which we may add the doctrine of the resurrection, which He hath so frequently, and so clearly discovered,



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viz. that at the last day, when the Son of Man shall come to judge the world, both the sea and the earth shall give up their dead ; that at the sound of a trumpet, the dust of every body shall immediately gather up itself from all places whithersoever it hath been dispersed, and haste every particle of it into its proper place again, so as to make up the self-same individual body, which it did before ; to which the soul also being reunited, the same numerical persons shall be restored again, to live in happiness or misery for evermore.

Now these and such like truths which the light of nature, as it is now clouded with sin, could never have discovered, our blessed Saviour hath so clearly taught and revealed to us, that there is nothing in the world that we have, or can have more ground to believe, than we have to believe them. It is true, they are mysteries which our senses cannot perceive, nor reason fathom, so as to comprehend them ; yet, howsoever, reason itself cannot but conclude them most certain, because of the infallible testimony which God Himself hath given of them. So that we have more reason to believe them, than we have to believe what we see or hear : for our senses we know are fallible, and we have often found them deceive us ; but we cannot say so of God, it being impossible for Him to deceive or lie. And therefore all that reason hath to do, about the mysteries which God reveals, is only to search into the grounds that we have to believe them to be revealed by God. For a Divine revelation being once proved, or supposed, reason itself requires an absolute assent unto it ; and that we concern ourselves no farther about it, but to believe it because God hath revealed it, whether we understand it or no. For there are many things in natural philosophy, and geometry itself, which we know by experience, or infer from reason to be really true and certain, though we cannot understand the reasons of them, nor imagine how they come to be so ; how much more, when we speak of Divine mysteries, should we captivate our reason, and submit it wholly to the infallible testimony which the Supreme Truth hath given to them ; not believing them more or less, because we do or do not understand them, but resolving our faith wholly and only into the testimony of God. And this is that which our blessed Lord

requires of those that come unto Him, saying, "Take My yoke upon you;" whereby He enjoins us to believe what He saith, and submit to His doctrine, without suffering our reason any farther to interpose, than only to search into the grounds and motives which we have to believe that it is His doctrine, and He hath said it; which whosoever is convinced of, must look no farther, but take His Word for it, and therefore believe it because He said it; yea, therefore said it that we might believe it. And whosoever dares pry too much into the secrets of God, or deny any mystery revealed in the Gospel, because they forsooth cannot understand it, nor make their shallow apprehensions reach unto the bottom of it, they have not yet taken Christ's yoke upon them; they have not learned to submit their judgments unto His, nor to believe the Gospel as they ought to do, even upon the infallible testimony and authority of Him that hath revealed it.

Secondly, The yoke of His discipline. For as we must believe what He hath said, only because He hath said it; so must we observe what He hath commanded, only because He hath commanded it. And as we are to believe His sayings, though they be never so much above our reason, so are we to observe His laws, though they be never so contrary to our temper and inclinations. And certainly, as His doctrine is the highest that ever was revealed to the sons of men, so is His discipline the strictest that we can be under. For He is so far from those horrid opinions that the Libertines and Antinomians would father upon Him, even from indulging sin, and licensing iniquity, as His pretended Vicar at Rome doth, that He requireth universal obedience to all the moral law, in the highest manner that can possibly be expressed. Indeed, one great end of His coming into the World, was to reform and better it; and not only to satisfy for our former sins, but to shew us also how to order our future lives exactly, according to the commands of God. Hence it was that He took off those false glosses which the Scribes and Pharisees had put upon the moral law, making as if it required nothing but external obedience; and hath declared to the world, that each com-

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mand is to be understood in its fullest latitude, and in the strictest sense that possibly can be put upon it.

ver. 21, 22.

Thus, in the fifth of St. Matthew, He sheweth, that the sixth commandment is not only to be understood of actual murdering another, but of being angry at, or despising our

ver. 27, 28.

brother. That the seventh commandment is to be understood, not only of adultery in the act, but even in the very

v. 33, 34, 37.

thoughts. That the third commandment doth not only forbid perjury, but taking the Name of God in vain. That the

ver. 38-40.

law of retaliation, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, hath reference only to courts of judicature, but as for private persons, they ought not so much as to resist evil; "but if any man would take away their coat, they should let him have their cloak also;" so as never to be forward to contend with any

ver. 44.

man about the things of this world. And that we do not fulfil the law, by loving our friends or neighbours only, but we

ch. 6. 34.

must love our very enemies too. And in the next chapter He shews us, that it is not enough that a man be just and honest in his dealings, so as not to cheat others to enrich himself, but that we should be so unconcerned about the world, as not to take care or thought for the morrow; but that the main and only design that we carry on in this life, be to prepare for another, "to lay up for ourselves treasures in Heaven."

ver. 20.

Thus I might shew you all along how our Saviour Himself prescribes the strictest rules, both of piety towards God, and of equity towards our neighbour, that it is possible for us to perform, or indeed for Himself to prescribe, telling us in

Matt. 5. 20.

plain terms, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." And therefore He expects that all those that come to Him, should excel not only the more brutish and debauched part of mankind, but even the most formal hypocrites, and the highest moralists in the world, in virtue and godliness. He expects that they that name His Name, and look for pardon and happiness

[Phil. 2. 15.]

upon His account, should "shine like lights in the world;" yea, so as to dazzle the eyes of all that are about them, and shame them into repentance and true conversion, that none that see them, but may know they have been with Christ,

observing the excellency of His laws and discipline, in all their actions both to God and man.

But here you must give me leave to stand still and wonder; wonder, I say, what is become of Christianity in the world, and into what corner of the earth it is gone! That there was such a religion established here, I verily believe, but there is little or no sign of it now amongst us. Insomuch that when I consider what Divine mysteries Christ hath revealed to us, and what strict and holy lives He requires and expects from them that profess His Name, I cannot but sometimes question with myself, whether there be such a thing as a Christian in the world? I am sure it is very rare to find one. But why should I wonder at that, when Christ Himself hath told us, that “many are called, but few are chosen?” and hath told us, that His flock is *τὸ μικρὸν ποίμνιον*, Matt. 20. 16. Luke 12. 32. ‘a very little flock.’ However, I hope, that there be some amongst us who truly fear the Lord, and walk in His ways, turning religion neither into faction nor superstition, but sincerely endeavouring to take Christ’s yoke upon them, and to observe His discipline exactly, although they be so few, so very few, that they are not discernible.

Thirdly, The yoke of the cross. Which our Saviour hath made the badge of His disciples; so that as the cross bore Him, they must bear it, if they would manifest themselves to be His disciples. “If any man,” saith He, “will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” That is, they that would go after Christ, so as to be His disciples indeed, must deny themselves whatsoever seems profitable or advantageous for them, whensoever it comes into competition with His interest in the world, or theirs in Him; so as to think no duty too great to undertake, no misery too heavy to undergo, so that He may be glorified by them on earth, and they may be glorified by Him in Heaven; so far from taking pleasure in sin, that it is their only trouble; and so far from being troubled at what they suffer for Christ, that it is their great pleasure: “Therefore,” saith St. Paul, “I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake.” Yea, and all the Apostles “rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name.” Matt. 16. 24. 2Cor. 12. 10. Acts 5. 41.



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Rom. 8. 18.

Oh, the excellent temper of a real Christian! who can not only trample upon the seeming greatness, but also upon the very briars and thorns of this present world, with pleasure and delight! Looking upon it not as his misery, but his happiness and honour to suffer reproaches, troubles, yea death itself for Christ, Who suffered infinitely more for us, than we can do for Him; as reckoning with St. Paul, that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

And verily, it is no wonder that they who come to Christ take this yoke upon them, so as to reckon that they can lose nothing for Him, as knowing they have all things in Him. Neither properly can it be counted misery, which is both accompanied with and leadeth to the highest happiness imaginable, even the love and favour of Almighty God: which being the only object of their souls' desires, who come to Christ, they cannot but esteem themselves happy in attaining it whatsoever it costs them. Or howsoever, they that come to Him, so as to be His disciples, cannot expect to fare better in the world than He their Lord and Master did; and therefore should prepare themselves beforehand, and resolve to take upon them, not only the yoke of His doctrine, so as to believe what He hath taught, and the yoke of His discipline, so as to observe what He hath commanded, but the yoke of His cross too, so as to bear whatsoever He shall see good to lay upon them, in order to His present, and their future glory.

Neither is it sufficient thus to take the yoke of Christ upon you, but you must do it too with that willingness, alacrity, and patience, as He requires you. So that you must not only make His religion that He hath taught you, your business, but your choice and recreation too; and so resign and submit your wills to His, as to be as ready to do, or suffer, any thing that He requires, as He is pleased to require it. For, to speak home unto you, if you expect to be pardoned and saved by Him, He expects to be served and honoured by you: yea, He expects that you should be wholly His; and by consequence should live as those who are none of your own, but being bought with a price, yea so high a price as His most precious blood, you should glorify

Him both in your souls and bodies, which are His. And therefore, you do in vain profess to be His disciples, and to trust on Him for pardon and Salvation, unless you submit your necks to His yoke, and cheerfully both do, and suffer, whatsoever He shall see good to lay upon you.

But then you will say, what benefit shall we have by coming unto Christ? For it seems, though He take one off, he will put another yoke upon us; and so we shall not be freed from our troubles, under which we laboured and were heavy laden, but only exchange one sort of trouble for another. It is true, Christ will not ease you of all your troubles, so as to live for the future without care or trouble in the world; yet the benefit that you receive by coming to Him, is far greater than I am able to express: for the burden which He frees you from is altogether intolerable, so that you are not able to bear it, without sinking under it, into the bottomless pit of eternal horror and confusion; whereas the trouble He puts you to, is, in its own nature, nothing else but the work that you were made for; and so is indeed your real happiness, or what tends unto it. So that there is nothing of real trouble in it, but only as your corrupt fancies imagine it to be so, because it is contrary to your sinful temper and inclinations. Hence our Saviour Himself here tells you, that "His yoke is easy, and His burden is light;" Matt. 11. 30. that is, there is nothing at all of difficulty in the bearing of it, if our minds be but rightly inclined to it. And upon this account too it is, that St. John saith, that "His commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5. 3. They may be grievous to flesh and blood, but not to one that is really Christ's disciple, because such a one cannot but in his judgment esteem it to be his honour, and by his experience find it to be his happiness, as well as duty, to observe and obey whatsoever He that made and redeemed him is pleased to require of him.

Thus I have shewn you your Saviour's mind and meaning in saying, "Take my yoke upon you;" what now remains but that you do it? I know you all expect and desire to be saved, and believe that "there is no other name given under [Acts 4. 12.] Heaven, whereby you can be saved, but the Name of Christ:" but now you see what Christ Himself, that came to save you, expects from you, in order to His saving of you, even that

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you take His yoke upon you. Let me therefore beseech you in His Name, that as you outwardly profess to believe in Him, so you would endeavour sincerely to obey Him : devote yourselves to His service, and adjust your lives to His commands : believe what He hath told you : perform what He hath enjoined you : submit to what He imposeth on you : take His yoke upon you, and learn of Him to be meek and lowly, and Himself hath assured you, that “ye shall find rest to your souls.”

Now, it being so necessary for all those that come to Christ, and expect any thing from Him, to take His yoke upon them, our Saviour here in the next place shews how we may do it, even if we do but learn of Him, especially in being meek and lowly. “And learn of Me,” saith He, implying that He requires nothing of us but what Himself hath done before us. And if we would but walk in His steps, and write after His copy, our work was done ; for He requires no more of us but to do as He did. It is none but His Own yoke that He would have us take upon us, that which Himself had borne before us, and for us too. “Take My yoke upon you,” saith He, “and learn of Me ;” as if He should have said, I am your Lord and Master, you profess yourselves to be My scholars and disciples ; and if you would carry and behave yourselves as becomes My disciples, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, so as to practise what I teach you, both by My precept and example.” From whence we may observe, that all who profess to believe in Christ, and expect happiness and Salvation from Him should endeavour to walk as He walked, and in all their actions imitate the pattern which He hath set them, as

<sup>1</sup> Cor. 11. 1. St. Paul did.

And verily, could we do this, how holy, how happy should we be ! For, questionless, as never man spake as Christ spake, so never man lived as He lived ; He being the only

<sup>1</sup> Pet. 2. 22. person that ever lived on earth, “Who did no sin, and in Whose mouth was found no guile.” Indeed, His whole man was so pure, so perfect, that there was not the least spot or blot either in His soul or body : there was no darkness in His mind, no error in His judgment, no vanity in His thoughts, no perverseness in His will, no pride in His spirit,

no malice in His heart, no irregularity, no disorder in all His affections: and therefore, no wonder that there was never an idle word heard come from Him, nor any sort of an unseemly action performed by Him. Neither was He only thus free from evil, but fraught with good. Indeed, His whole life was but as one continued act of religion and charity; for, as the Apostle tells us, “He went about doing good.” Acts 10. 38. Wheresoever He came, you still find Him either praying, or preaching, or dispersing His miraculous charity and goodness amongst the people; sometimes giving eyes to the blind, and legs unto the lame; sometimes health to the sick, and life to the dead; always doing some good act or other, for God, or men: insomuch that there is no grace, no virtue whatsoever, but what He hath given us an exact pattern and example of. I need not instance in particulars; His life, no less than four times, and by four several writers infallibly recorded, doth sufficiently attest, how courteous He was in His carriage, how patient under His sufferings, how content with His condition, how compassionate to the miserable, how charitable to the poor, how submissive to His parents, how loving and just to all. And if we speak of His behaviour towards God, nothing that He did all His life long, but doth clearly manifest His extraordinary love to Him, extraordinary trust on Him, extraordinary zeal for Him, extraordinary submission to Him, and extraordinary diligence and care to reveal His will, advance His glory, and propagate His interest amongst the sons of men.

And certainly, whatsoever our Saviour, as man did, He therefore did it, that we by Him might learn how to do it. But of all those excellent and Divine graces, that His blessed soul was endowed and His life adorned withal, the principal thing that He would have us to learn of Him, is “to be meek and lowly in heart: learn of Me,” saith He, “for I am meek and lowly in heart;” not learn of Me to work miracles, to heal the sick, or raise the dead; not learn of Me to turn water into wine, or to make a few loaves to suffice thousands; but “learn of Me to be meek and lowly in heart.”

II. This, therefore, being the great lesson, which our



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First, therefore, as for His “ meekness,” it was so remarkable and extraordinary in Him, that all the affronts and injuries which He daily received, could never move Him to anger. And though He was often sorrowful, and sometimes wept ; yet as He is never said to have laughed, so neither was He ever angry but once, and that was upon a just occasion, when the Pharisees upbraided Him for doing good upon the Sabbath-day ; then indeed He is said to have  
 Mark 3. 5. looked on them with anger, “ being grieved for the hardness of their hearts ;” so that He was angry at them not for any injury which they offered to Him, but for the injury which they did themselves by their unbelief, and the “ hardness of their hearts.” But when Himself was only concerned, how reproachfully soever they spake against Him, how cruelly soever they used Him, His meek and serene spirit was never moved or disturbed at it.

Moses, indeed, hath the testimony of God Himself, that  
 [Num. 12. he was the “ meekest man upon the face of the earth ;” yet  
 3.]  
 Ps. 106. 33. the “ Israelites provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.” But in this our blessed Saviour incomparably excelled Moses ; being of that rare temper, that gentle nature, that meek and mild disposition, that all the injuries which the malice of men or devils conspired to heap upon Him, could never extort a rash, angry, or inconsiderate word from Him ; “ when He was reviled, He reviled not again ; when He suffered, He threatened not ; but  
 1 Pet. 2. 23, committed Himself to God that judgeth righteously.” “ He  
 Isa. 53. 7. was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth ; He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.” Thus when His own Disciple betrayed Him into the hands of His enraged enemies, with an hypocritical and  
 Luke 22. 48. dissembling kiss, all that He replied was only, “ Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss ?” And when the malicious multitude, that thirsted after His blood, had now got Him into their hands, and His Disciples making some small resistance, one of them smote the servant of the High

Priest, and cut off his right ear ; He was so far from being discomposed, or disturbed in His mind by any unruly and revengeful passion, that He wrought a miracle to restore Luke 22. 51. and heal it. Yea, and when His hands and feet were fastened to the cross with nails drove through them, those very sharp and exquisite pains, which racked and tortured His whole body, could not in the least exasperate or provoke His soul against them that did it ; yea, so far was He from being angry with them Himself, that He prayed to His Father that He would not be angry with them neither ; in the midst of all His torments, crying out, “ Father, for- Luke 23. 34. give them, they know not what they do.”

Now, as your Lord and Master carried Himself to His, so He expects that you do the like towards your enemies, even that you learn of Him to be meek and gentle, to them also that will not be so to you : for He would have you do as He did, live above the world, so as to condemn both all the overtures that it can make, and all the injuries that it can do unto you ; otherwise you can never enjoy Him, nor yourselves, neither. “ In your patience,” saith He, “ possess ye Luke 21. 19. your souls ;” implying that when a man is impatient under any trouble, and incensed against the instruments of it, he is at present beside himself ; he doth not enjoy or possess his own soul, but is strangely transported into a kind of frenzy, which makes him incapable, while it lasts, of using his reason, or exerting the several faculties of his soul as he ought to do. And I suppose there are none here present that indulge this passion, but find by experience, how unfit it makes them for temporal, much more for spiritual employments : and, I am sure, by giving way to this passion, we do ourselves more hurt, than it is possible for any one else to do us : for hereby we deprive ourselves of our very selves, and suffer that fire to be kindled in our breasts, which, if not timely prevented, will break out in an open flame, and burn up and destroy both soul and body.

And therefore, if any of you desire to carry yourselves like Christians, or to be happy, even in this life, you must be sure to keep down this turbulent and unruly passion ; and if at any time through surprise or inadvertency, it begin to rise, be sure to nip it in the bud ; if you do not conquer

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Matt. 5. 5.

Ps. 37. 11.

1 Pet. 3. 4.

it at first, it will conquer you at last, and so occasion your misery in this, as well as in the world to come. Whereas, could you always keep your spirits calm, and your soul serene in the midst of those various storms and tempests you meet with here below, whatsoever may be without, there will still be happiness and tranquillity within. Yea, our Saviour Himself hath pronounced such to be blessed; "Blessed," saith He, "are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." "The meek shall inherit the earth," saith David, "and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." And as to be of such a composed, sedate, meek, and gentle temper, is advantageous to ourselves, so is it very acceptable unto God: for "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price;" it is an ornament, yea an ornament of great price, and that in the esteem of God Himself: and therefore, if you would live quietly within yourselves, or acceptably towards God, you must use all means imaginable to suppress this troublesome and mischievous passion of anger and malice, and learn of Christ your Master to be "meek,

And lowly in heart:" which is the next particular virtue which our Saviour would have us learn of Him: Who certainly hath given us the highest example of it, that ever was or ever can be set before us. It was an eminent instance of His humility, that He being the immortal God should condescend so much as to become a mortal man. That eternity should stoop to time, Heaven bow down to earth, He that made the world be born into it, and the Creator of all things become Himself a creature; who is able to think of it without astonishment, or to speak of it without adoration? That He "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, should make Himself of no reputation, and take upon Him the form of a servant, and be made in the likeness of men." Oh mystery of mysteries! who is able to dive into the bottom of this Divine humility? And yet, as if this had not been enough, this infinite and all-glorious Person did not only become man, but one of the meanest of men; not only a servant, but the servant of servants. For though He had thousands of glorious Saints and Angels to minister to

Him in Heaven, He came down that Himself might minister to the unworthiest of all creatures, even to men on earth : for, as He Himself saith, "the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Indeed, although He was the Supreme Governor and Disposer of all things in the world, yet when He was here below, He chose nothing for Himself out of all things which He had, but the lowest and meanest that could be imagined. His mother, whom He chose to be born of, was none of the greatest ladies of the world, but a poor virgin, fit to be spouse to no greater a person than a carpenter. And though all the palaces in the earth were His, yet He chose to be born in a stable, where He had no other cradle but a manger. And though while a child of twelve years old, He knew who He was, and whence He came, as appears from His answer to His mother, saying, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" yet howsoever He humbly submitted and was subject to His mother and the honest carpenter to whom she was espoused, and followed His trade, which as some of the ancients assert, was principally to make ploughs and yokes : and in this despicable and poor condition the King of Glory Himself lived, until He was about thirty years of age. And when He appeared on the stage of the world, though all the world was His, yet He had not one foot of land in all the world, for "He had not where to lay His head." Neither did He choose to converse with the rich and learned part of the world, but a company of poor and silly fishermen were His continual associates. After which time, He was so far from being honoured or respected of men, and from aspiring after the applause, or enjoying the pleasures of the world, that He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, derided, spit upon, accused, arraigned, condemned by those very persons, who could not pronounce the sentence against Him, had not Himself vouchsafed them breath to do it ; nor have moved either hand or tongue against Him, had not He assisted them. And after all this, He submitted to the most vile, most painful, and most ignominious death, that could possibly be inflicted upon the basest of men ; being crucified betwixt two malefactors, persons justly condemned to die for

Matt. 20. 28.

Luke 2. 49.

[Justin.  
Mart. c.  
Tryph. p.  
186. D. Ed.  
Ben.]

Luke 9. 58.



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their atrocious crimes and villanies. And thus, as He came into the world, so He went out again in the lowest and meanest manner that possibly He could.

Oh wonder of wonders! that highness itself should become thus lowly, glory and excellency itself thus humble! But tell me then, shall the glorious God of Heaven Himself become thus humble and lowly; and shall we poor mortals upon earth be proud? Shall beauty, glory, majesty, supereminency itself, think no place too mean, no work too low, no service too contemptible, no death too vile for him; and is it possible for such mean, such low, such despicable, such vile, and altogether worthless creatures as we are; is it possible, I say, that we should talk of our honour and dignity, that we should think every thing below us, or that we should be arrogant and conceited of what we have or do? What, poor and proud too? Shall He that had all things be proud of nothing, and shall we that have nothing be proud of all things? What a strange thing is the heart of man become, that was at first so composed, that nothing but infinite goodness itself could fill it; and now the least blast of wind, yea vanity itself immediately swells and puffs it up! And let me tell you, whatever other sins many of you may be free from, I fear there are few, or none, but is guilty of this. But I cannot but sometimes wonder with myself, what it is that men or women are so generally proud of. Is it the largeness of your estate, the fulness of your trade, or the greatness of your credit in the world? Is it the proportion of your bodies, the comeliness of your features, or the applause and honour which you have from others, that you are proud of? But if you be proud of these things, you are proud indeed, but it is of nothing. For these things have no real being in the world, nor any other existence, but only in your own corrupt and deluded fancies. It is true, silver and gold are things; but they are not riches unless you think them so. The same may be said of beauty, which we may shut our eyes against, and wink into blackness and deformity. And as for honour and applause, that is a mere chimera, a dream, a shadow, a very, very nothing: which philosophy itself, as well as theology, could never yet define or describe, either its nature, or its seat, what or where it is.

And, though these things may seem paradoxes to you, yet your Saviour knew them to be real truths: and therefore, you never find Him any more desirous of, or concerned about, those things, than as if there were no such things in the world, as really there are not. When He had taken our nature upon Him, He came in and went out of the world again without ever taking notice of those things, unless it was to reprove men for doting on them. He could see nothing upon earth to be proud of: and therefore, though all things were at His service and command, yet He was not only humble Himself, but hath enjoined all His disciples to be so too.

Hence, therefore, if any of you desire to be Christians indeed, the first lesson that you must learn of your Lord and Master, is to be "meek and lowly;" still remembering that you can never think too highly of God, nor too lowly of yourselves. It is for men in Bedlam to please themselves with feathers, to think their prison to be a palace, and their chains to be badges of honour: and so to pride themselves in the vain imaginations of their own distracted fancies. As for such amongst you, who are come unto yourselves, and by consequence unto Christ too, you should carry yourselves like men of wisdom and understanding, that know you have many things to be humbled for, but nothing in the world to be proud of. And therefore, howsoever you are in others', you are still to be vile and base in your own eyes; looking upon yourselves as less than the least of all God's mercies, and greater than the greatest of all sinners. And let me tell you, the lower you are in your own, the higher you will be in God's esteem: "for whosoever exalteth himself shall Luke 14. 11. be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted;" "for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." 1 Pet. 5. 5. So that he that is clothed with humility, need not fear but he shall be adorned with all true grace and virtue whatsoever. And Christ Himself hath here promised, that such amongst you as are "meek and lowly shall find rest to your souls."

III. And so I come to the last thing to be explained in few terms, even what is that "rest" here spoken of. In general, it is rest for our souls, and that both in this, and also

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in the world to come. First, even in this life: they that take Christ's yoke upon them, and are "meek and lowly in heart," find unspeakable rest, quiet, and satisfaction in their souls, from the very performance of those duties, and the exercise of those graces, which Christ requireth of them. Insomuch, that howsoever their outward condition be, there cannot but be calmness and tranquillity within. For the soul being made on purpose to love, honour, and obey its Maker, it was so composed, that it cannot but be impatient, restless, and unquiet, whilst it is doing any thing else but what it was designed for: and therefore, as the Lord Himself hath told us "There is no peace unto the wicked:" neither indeed can be; their wickedness itself raising an intestine war in their own bowels, which bears down all before it, and keeps the soul in a continual hurry and confusion. Whereas one that is constant and conscientious in doing what God requires of him, cannot but find a secret kind of peace and satisfaction within himself, arising from the apprehensions that he hath done his duty, and pleased God that made him. Which is certainly the highest happiness that we can attain to upon earth, and an earnest of that everlasting rest which we expect in Heaven, where we shall rest from our troubles, which shall no more befall us; rest from our fears, which shall no more seize on us; rest from sin, which shall no more be in us; rest from Satan, who shall no more come near us; yea, "we shall rest from all our labours, and our works shall follow us." O glorious rest! when we shall not only rest from whatsoever is evil, but rest in Him that is the chiefest good; where we shall be infinitely more happy than here we can be: when our souls shall solace themselves in the embracements of love itself, and rest in the centre of all perfections: when all the faculties of our souls, and members of our bodies shall be restored to their primitive frame and constitution; and so our whole man shall be capable of perfectly beholding, admiring, and enjoying beauty, glory, and goodness itself. This—this, therefore, is the accomplishment of that rest, which they shall find to their souls, who take Christ's yoke upon them, and learn of Him to be meek and lowly.

Thus I have done my duty in explaining these words of

our blessed Lord unto you ; yours now begins, which is, to put them into practice. I know you all hope and desire to be saved by Christ : but I beseech you to consider, upon what terms you can be saved by Him. For here you see, that this very person, from Whom you expect Salvation, hath strictly enjoined you, in order to it, to take His yoke upon you, and to learn of Him to be meek and lowly. So that you must make Him the pattern of your lives here, or else you cannot expect that He should be the portion of your souls hereafter. Unless you follow Him in the ways of holiness upon earth, you cannot come to Him in Heaven. And therefore, let me advise you to go home, and bethink yourselves of your Saviour's words, and what you have heard upon them : and if you matter not whether you be saved, or no, think of them no more : but if you do, follow His directions, "Take His yoke upon you, and learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls."



## SERMON CXL.

AN EXHORTATION TO THE LOVE OF GOD.

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MATT. xxii. 37.

*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

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LET me now bespeak your affection for the Lord your God; not the love you have for other things, but a love above all things: gather up your scattered affections from all things here below, and place them upon Him that made them: put Him not off any longer with overpowered passions, but love Him most, Whom be sure you can never love too much; no, never fear excess in your love to God, which is capable of no other extreme but only of defect. In other things, mediocrity is a virtue, but here it is a vice: for we must love Him exceedingly, or we cannot love Him truly; so that the only measure of our loving Him, is to love Him without measure: and, therefore, he that thinks he loves God enough, doth not love Him at all. In creature-comforts our affections may grow excessive, and our love exorbitant; but the transcendent perfections that reside in God render Him so incapable of being loved too much, that the highest passions that we can raise up to Him, are still infinitely below what He deserves from us. No, take it for a certain truth, you can never love the world too little, nor God too much. Our love to other things is like other rivers, the best when it keeps within its bounds; but our love to God is like the river Nilus in Egypt, most welcome when it

overflows. Bridle, therefore, your passions to the creatures, but let them run loose to their Creator: never fear loving Him too much, seeing the highest of your passions is no more than finite; whereas the lowest of His perfections is no less than infinite: you can never love God more than you ought, and therefore love Him as much as you can.

Where, when I say, you must always love Him, I do not mean as if you should have some love for Him as well as for other things, but that you should have more love for Him than all things; for that is not accounted as love to God, which is either surpassed or equalled with our love to the creatures: and, therefore, whensoever you hear me mention “loving of God,” you must still apprehend me speaking of such a love to Him as exceeds and outstrips our love to all things besides; for we love God no more than we love Him more than all things else. He that loves God no more than other things, loves the other things more than God; for he hath no love for God at all, because he doth not love Him above all. For I say again, we have no more love for Him, than we have more love for Him than other things: so long as our love is matched or over-topped with our love to other things, we may love the other things, but we do not love God; but the least degree of our love to God more than to all things else, makes it to be true and acceptable love to Him. Some may love God many degrees beyond all things else, others few; and so one man may have more love to God than another; but he that loveth Him never a degree beyond all things else, he hath no love for Him at all. And therefore, I say again, when you hear me advising you “to love God,” I would have you all along remember, I mean only such a love to Him as surmounts and exceeds your affections to all things in the world besides. This is the love that God requires of us, and this is the love that we owe to God. This, therefore, is the love that I counsel you all, as you will answer it at the dreadful day of judgment, to fix upon the great God. It is too long already that you have loved other things more than God; now, for shame, begin to love God more than all other things.

O, therefore, that I knew what words to take unto myself, that whilst I am speaking, this sacred fire may kindle in all your souls, that you may no longer commit sacrilege, in rob-

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bing God of that which He hath commanded you to appropriate to Himself. I know your affections are so glued to the world, that it is not in the power of man to rend them thence, much less is it within the reach of human strength to raise them up from earth to heaven, and from sin to God. But I know also it is by such counsels, commands, and exhortations to you, that God is pleased to work this and all other graces in you: it is by His ministers that He useth to strike this sacred fire out of our flinty hearts. To raise up, therefore, your affections to the Most High God, give me leave to present some motives to you; and the Lord of His infinite mercy be pleased to work them upon you, that whilst you hear the voice of your fellow-creature sounding in your ears, you may feel the power of your great Creator reaching to your hearts, wrenching your affections from all things here below, and mounting them up unto Himself above.

Well, then: what motives shall I use to prevail upon you? Verily, my brethren, whilst I consider what considerations to lay before you, to blow up your affections unto God, there are so many crowd themselves into my busy thoughts, to be presented unto yours, that I scarce know where to begin, and when I have begun, I fear I shall scarce know where to end. I cannot look upon you as being in this place, but I must tell you, you are bound to love the Great God for it; for had not He loved you, you would not been in God's House, but the Devil's dungeon, at this very moment; and certainly His love to you may well deserve your love to Him. Nay, I cannot send mine eye any way, but it still brings me in new motives to love God. If I look above me, there are the Heavens that He hath made for our future happiness; if beneath me, there is the earth He hath made for our present abode; if about me, there are the creatures He hath made for our use and comfort, all calling upon us to love that God that made them. Nay, verily, my very calling upon you to love God is a mercy for which you are bound to love Him; and the more I call upon you to love Him, the more you are bound to love Him for my calling upon you. Nay, to speak plainly, if there be ever a soul in the congregation that loves God, let me tell thee thou art bound to love Him more for thy loving Him at all; so that not only His love to thee, but thy love to Him, should stir up in thee still

greater affections for Him ; for assure thyself thou art infinitely engaged to Him for thy loving of Him, as well as for His loving of thee ; for had He not first loved thee, thou couldst never have loved Him.

Thus, I say, I can fix mine eyes upon nothing, but it supplies me with fresh motives to love God. But, for my more orderly presenting them unto your thoughts, I shall digest them all into two heads ; endeavouring to raise up your affections unto God from the consideration,

I. Of the properties of that love we ought to have for God.

II. Of the perfections of that God we ought to love.

I. From the properties of the love we owe to God. And certainly, did we but know what it was to love God experimentally, as well as notionally, we should find there is greater happiness to be enjoyed in the performance of this one duty, than in all the enjoyments that this world can afford us. Give me leave to shew you some of the rare properties of this Divine love.

1. It is the first and the great commandment.

*Matt. 22. 38.*

[i.] First in order, for this is the first of all the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt have none other gods before me ;" *Exod. 20. 3.* which is as much as if He should have said, Thou shalt love nothing as God before Me, worship nothing as God before Me, serve nothing as God before Me; nay, thou shalt not so much as have any other gods before Me. Whereas it is plain, that he that loves any thing more than God, or doth not love God more than all things, he hath, and loveth, other gods before Jehovah. For whatsoever a man loves and prefers before other things, that is his God. Thus a voluptuous person is said "to make his belly his god," because he minds his belly before all things else : and therefore is covetousness called "idolatry," *Phil. 3. 19. Colos. 3. 5.* because the covetous man minds and loves his riches more than all things else : and the reason is, because it is to God only to Whom we owe the choicest of our affections. And, therefore, whatsoever we love most, to that we give what is proper and peculiar to the true God : and so, though it be not a god in itself, yet we make it one in our esteem : and therefore every one that loves any thing more than Jehovah, hath other gods before Him. Know ye then of a certainty, that every soul amongst you that loves any thing more than



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God, or doth not love God more than all things, is a cursed idolater: thou worshippest a false instead of a true God. Dost thou, therefore, love riches more than God? It is the mammon of unrighteousness that is thy God. Is it pleasures thou lovest more than God? Then pleasures are thy God. Is it a husband or wife thou lovest more than God? Then it is thy husband or wife that is thy God. Is it thy children, thy liberty, thy health, thy credit, thy sins, thy life, that thou lovest more than the great God? These, these are thy gods, these are the deities thou worshippest! Wonder no longer at the Persians for adoring the sun; wonder not at the Indians for worshipping sticks and stones; wonder not at the Americans for falling down to Satan, nor at the Papists for bowing to images; but wonder, oh wonder at thyself, that worshippest thyself, and lovest thine own concerns before the great God! Oh, my brethren! that you would bethink yourselves what gross and cursed idolaters you all are, so long as you love any thing more than God: it is love that is the principal worship of the God of Heaven, and this you give to the toys on earth! Oh, consider with yourselves! What, love pleasures more than God! Honours more than God! Riches more than God! Relations more than God! Liberty more than God! Life, or any thing more than God! Thou shameful idolater! call thyself no longer a Christian, lay aside thy professions, pretend not to be a worshipper of the true God, so long as thou worshippest so many false ones before Him. Oh, cursed apostasy! that we, who give up our names in Baptism unto God, would now give our souls to the Devil, our love to the world, our affections to sin: who, instead of turning, with the Thessalonians, from idols unto God, turn with the Indians from God to idols; instead of leaving the world to cleave to God, we leave God to cleave to the world. Give me leave to use the Apostle's exhortation, now I am preaching to you Christians, as well as if I was preaching to the idolatrous heathen, "Brethren, keep yourselves from idols." Oh, keep yourselves from idols, from idol-riches, from idol-honours, from idol-lusts, from idol-self; oh, turn from these and all other idols, to serve the living and true God: remember it is the first command, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me:"

Thess. 1. 9.

1 John 5. 21.

which, in effect, is as much as to say, Thou shalt love nothing more than Me.

[ii.] In dignity as it hath the first place, so hath it the best Being for its immediate object. In the other commands, some of them respect God's Name, others His worship, others His Sabbaths, others His people,—but this respects His Person; and therefore it is the most proper and peculiar worship that we can perform unto Him. And, therefore, as ever you desire, not only to forsake your false gods, but to worship the true One, you must love Him above all things; all other worship is but in reference unto this, and signifies nothing at all without it. It is true, praying, and reading, and hearing, and receiving of the Sacrament, and the like, are all parts of God's worship; but alas! this is only the body; it is love to God that is the soul of worship: and these external performances before God, are no further any true worship of Him than as they have respect unto, and terminate in true love unto Him; which indeed is the end of all Ordinances. Why do you pray, but that you may love God? Why hear, but to love God? Why receive the Sacrament, but to love God more? It is the love of God that is the great end of all these duties, and therefore it is the most proper and immediate worship that we can perform to God. And therefore St. Augustine, speaking of these words, in his tenth book *de Civitate Dei*, saith, [*In quo*] *quid aliud mandatur, nisi ut ei quantum potest commendet diligendum Deum? Hic est Dei cultus, hæc vera religio; hæc recta pietas, hæc tantum Deo debita servitus:* 'What is here commanded but to love God? This is the worship of God, this is true religion, this is right piety, this is the service due only unto God.' And therefore ye in vain pretend to be religious, or to worship the true God, unless you love Him above all things: this is the worship that He requireth from you, and this is the worship that you owe to Him; do this, and then you serve the true God; leave this undone, and do what you will besides, you are still idolaters: for it is first

[iii.] In performance. A man can perform no other command until he first perform this; thou canst not pray, nor read, nor hear, nor give alms; thou canst do nothing as

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1 Cor. 13. 1.

thou oughtest to do, unless thou first lovest God; for there is nothing good but what proceeds from love to the chiefest good; nothing is accepted by God, but what is grounded upon love to Him. Thou mayest pray thy tongue, and hear thy ears to the very stumps; thou mayest fast thy body into a skeleton, and make thy couch to swim continually in thy tears; thou mayest bestow thy estate wholly upon the poor, and give thy body to be burned; thou mayest live like an Angel, and die like a serpent; yet let me tell thee, without love to God, it all signifies nothing: thy tears will be all rejected, thy prayers slighted, thy alms despised, and all thy performances disregarded, as things nothing worth, unless they proceed from love to God; and therefore saith the Apostle, “If I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” What charity doth he speak of? Certainly love or charity to God, and for God’s sake to men; without this thou mayest fill the air with sighs, the Heavens with groans, the sea with tears, and yet find no favour or acceptance in the sight of God: no, thou must first love Him above all things, before thou canst do any thing pleasing to Him; not only because all the duties to Him cannot be equivalent to the one horrid sin thou committest against Him, in loving other things before Him, but also because it is this love to God only that performs all other duties; without which God will never smell a sweet savour from them. What, therefore, though thou prayest? What, though thou readest? What, though thou hearest? What, though thou comest to Church? What, though thou performest all other duties unto God? If thou omittest this, thou hadst as good do nothing: for there is not a duty thou performest without this, that there is any thing of good, but a great deal of evil in it. Oh! therefore, as ever you desire to do any thing pleasing unto God, you must first love Him above all things. There is not the greatest duty, but without this will certainly be rejected; and there is not the least, but with it will certainly be accepted.

2. It is the greatest too, as well as the first commandment. For,

[i.] It is that to which all the rest tend. This is, as it

were, the sea into which the other commands, as the lesser rivers, do all empty themselves. Not as if, in respect of the lawgiver, one is greater than another, for the same God commanded them all; but because all the rest are but as it were so many branches of this: so that there is not any of the rest but tend to the advancement of this. And therefore we cannot perform any other commands aright, unless our eye be fixed upon this.

[ii.] It is that under which the rest are all contained; so that a man that doth not love God, can do nothing; whilst he that doth love God, doth all things that are required of him: for as the Apostle saith, "All the Law," Gal. 5. 14. to wit, of the second table, "is fulfilled in one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" so we may well say, all, both Law and Gospel, is fulfilled in this one word, Thou shalt love the Lord above thyself, and all things else: so that he that doth not perform this one command, cannot perform the other; but he that performeth this, cannot but perform the rest.

[iii.] It is that in which they all end. Praying, and hearing, and repenting, faith, and hope, and sorrow, yea all the other commands will end with us, and so resolve themselves into this one which shall never end; for "Charity" 1 Cor. 13. 8. never faileth." And therefore it is said, "And now abideth" ver. 13. faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity:" because this is that in which the other are contained, and this is that which will continue when the other are all ceased.

3. Consider, that love to God will make all other duties easy. To him that doth not love God, the easiest duty is difficult; to him that doth love Him, the difficultest duty is easy. For love is of that quality, that it makes us divest ourselves of our former selfishness, and to be inconsiderate of our own concerns, in comparison of his we love. How do inflamed lovers lay aside the thoughts of health, of quiet, liberty, life, and any thing for the enjoyment and pleasing of the party they love! It is so in temporals, and certainly then much more in spirituals. If thy heart be set upon God, thou wilt think nothing too great for Him, no duty too great to undertake, no misery too heavy to



- SERM. XL. — undergo, for Him Whom thy soul loveth. Thus the spouse in the Canticles, her soul being inflamed with love to Christ, she forgets her rest, her sleep, her ease, her quiet, to find Him she loved; “she sought Him upon her bed, in the streets, in the broad way, every where to find Him.” And so thou, if thou dost indeed love God, wilt count all things as loss, and dross, and dung, in comparison of him; friends, relations, estates, preferments, health, strength, liberty, life, thou wilt look upon these things, as not worthy to come into competition with God. And therefore thou wilt not balk the least duty imaginable for the attainment of the highest glory conceivable. What is the reason you are so loth to pray, loth to hear, loth to read the Scriptures, loth to give alms, loth to repent, and loth to perform other duties? And what is the reason you are so backward to these duties, and those duties are so hard to you? Why, the reason is, because you do not love God. If you loved Him, it would not be your trouble, but your joy to come before Him. Thus David, “I rejoiced when they said unto me, Let us go up to the house of the Lord.” “Yea, a day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” Thus will it be with thee, though perhaps, now, that thou hast no love but rather hatred for God, thou thinkest it tedious and irksome to pray and hear, and sit so long in the house of God; but let me tell thee, if ever God be pleased to raise up thy affections to Himself, the hardest duty will be as easy as ever the easiest duty was hard unto thee; thou wilt take as much, yea more delight, in drawing nigh to God, than ever thou didst in running from Him. And, therefore, if ever thou wouldest have the paths of wisdom pleasant, the ways of holiness delightsome to thee, thou must endeavour to get thy heart emptied of its love to sin, which as yet it is filled with, and filled with the love of God, of which as yet it is empty.
- Rom. 8. 28. 4. If thou lovest God, “all things shall work together for thy good.” So long as thou lovest any thing more than God, there is not the best of thy seeming goods but are real evils to thee: whereas, if thou lovest Him above all things, there is not the worst of thy seeming evils but shall be real

goods unto thee. Oh, then, who would love any thing more than God, to have His very mercies turned into miseries? Who would not love God more than all things, to have His very miseries turned into mercies?

5. It is the work of Angels, and the happiness of Heaven. This is that crown of glory we all expect to have set upon our heads when we arrive at our Father's kingdom: gold and silver there is none, but joy and love to God. Oh, how shall our hearts be transported with it! And certainly, for all the low conceits that you and I may have of true love to God, certainly the Angels and glorified Saints find it to be the richest treasure in all their kingdoms: so that, if you love God, you may antedate Heaven, and bring down those joys to you, before God takes you up to them.

6. Love to God is the best evidence of our title to the crown of glory. If there be any flaw or defect in your love to God, all your other evidences will be of no force; but if thy love to God be true and cordial, thou hast as sure a title to the joys of Heaven, as thou hast to thy estate upon earth: and thou hast never an evidence can more firmly prove thy interest in what thou hast here, than true love to God will evidence thy title to what thou hopest for hereafter. For if thy love to God be true love, thy other graces are all true graces; thy repentance is true repentance, thy faith true faith, thy humility true humility; and if thy graces be true on earth, thy glory must needs be great in Heaven. And, therefore, if you would know whether you have any title to Heaven, consider what love you have to God on earth. And assure thyself, when thou and I shall be summoned at the grand assize to bring in our evidences for the Kingdom of Heaven, whatsoever other evidences we bring, unless we bring this, even love to God above all things, the rest will all signify nothing: this one evidence is enough without all other; and all other are nothing without this.

7. Love God truly above all things here, and thou shalt enjoy all things perfectly in God hereafter. Let Him have <sup>1 Cor. 2. 9.</sup> the principal room in thy heart on earth, and thou shalt have the principal room in His house in Heaven: let thy heart be wholly set upon Him in time, and thy soul shall be

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certainly blessed in Him to eternity. Oh! therefore, as ever you desire to be lifted up to the height of happiness, rather than thrown down into the depth of misery, when you die, love nothing more than God, but God more than all things whilst you live.

II. Secondly, from the perfections of that God, Whom we ought to love. Now there are two things, in a person, which draw our affections to him.

1. First, his love to us.

2. His loveliness in himself.

And certainly, if you and I could fix our contemplations upon the infinite expressions of God's love to us, and the infinite perfections of His loveliness in Himself, we should be as unable to keep off our affections from Him, as we are now unable to draw them, and raise them up to Him. Well, give me leave to be your remembrancer this evening, of what God hath done for you, and of what He is in Himself; and if, after all that I shall say, you are still resolved to love yourselves, your health, your wealth, your sins, your lusts, your life, or any thing more than God; for my part, I shall almost despair of ever being an instrument of good to your souls more. For if such considerations as these are, even of what God is in Himself, and of what He hath been to you, will not prevail upon you to leave doting upon toys, and to "love the Lord your God with all your hearts," for my part I know not what others can. Well then,

1. First, Consider God's love to you, or how much you are engaged to Him for what He hath done for you. But before I make a further progress into this consideration, it will be first necessary to remove a stumbling-block which lies in our way. For some of you may say, have you not taught us all along that we must love God more than all things? Whereas, if we love Him only for what He hath done for us, we shall love ourselves more than Him. For by this means our eye being fixed principally upon ourselves, we should mind ourselves only, and Him no further than as He is beneficial to us, not at all as He is transcendently glorious in Himself; and so our affections being so mercenary and selfish, they cannot possibly be filial and sin-

cere. And how can it be lawful for us thus to eye ourselves more than Him, or Him only in respect to ourselves?

To this I answer,

[i.] First, We must distinguish betwixt the occasion, and scope of our love; that which first draws my love to Him, and that which afterwards fixeth my love upon Him. I do not say, this is the great reason why we ought to love God; for certainly He infinitely more deserves our love for what He is in Himself, than for what He is to us: for the expressions of His love to us are but finite, whereas the perfections of His loveliness in Himself are infinite. But, howsoever, I may make use of this consideration as a motive to stir up your love to Him. And certainly, though the principal reason why we should love God, is, because He is so infinitely good in Himself, yet the principal motive of our love to Him, is the consideration of what continual goodness He hath shewn to us. For we are more sensible of those streams of goodness that flow from Him, than of the fountain of goodness that is in Him. We cannot see how good He is in Himself, but we daily see how good He is to us; and it is our eye principally that affects our hearts: so that, though we are to love Him principally for what He is in Himself, yet the best means to raise up our affections so as to love Him for what He is in Himself, is the consideration of the manifold expressions of His love to us.

[ii.] Secondly, The Scripture doth give us sufficient warrant to love Him for what He doth for us, as well as for what He is in Himself, though we are still principally to love Him for what He is in Himself, rather than for what He is to us.

Give me leave to instance in these three or four places.

(1.) First, "I love the Lord, because He hath heard the Psal. 116. 1. voice of my prayers." This was the reason why he loved God's person, because God had heard his prayer.

(2.) Secondly, "We love Him, because He first loved 1 John 4. 19. us." Not only we love Him, because He deserves love from us; but we love Him, because He first loved us. Therefore, because He loves us, therefore we do love Him; and, therefore, the consideration of His love to us is one reason of our love to Him.



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Luke 7. 47.

(3.) Thirdly, "Her sins be forgiven," therefore, "she loved much." For, though we read, indeed, "for she loved much," yet the other seems to be the truer exposition of them. For the Greek word *ἀγαπᾷ* will well bear that sense, and the scope of the place will scarce admit of any other; for our Saviour is here giving the reason why Mary had expressed so much love to Him, even because He had expressed so much love to her, in the forgiving of her sins. He did not, therefore, forgive her many sins, because she loved much; but, therefore, she loved much, because He had forgiven her so many sins. And indeed the antithesis in the same verse requires this interpretation, "but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little;" which antithesis plainly implies the foregoing thesis to be; he to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much, not he that loveth much, to the same much is forgiven. And indeed the analogy of faith requires it too; for God doth not pardon our sins because we love Him, but rather we love Him, because He pardons our sins. But,

(4.) That we may love God for His goodness to us, is plain from the words of my text too, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" so that we are not only to love Him as He is the Lord, but as He is our God; "Thou shalt love the Lord," that implies that we must love Him for what He is in Himself; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," that denotes that we are to love Him for what He is to us.

Well, then; seeing we may love the Lord for what He hath done for us, let us a little consider with ourselves what He hath done for us, for which we should thus love Him. And whilst I shall speak of the love of God, let your hearts be inflamed with love to Him: as one candle lights another, so let the flames of love in God to you, light the like flames of love in you to Him. Consider,

1. It was God that raised thee out of nothing; had He not made thee thou hadst not been. Alas! from all eternity thou wast nothing, and hadst been so still, had not He caused thee to spring up like a tender bud, testifying from whence thou camest, and upon whom thou dependest, by thy inability to help thyself. Had not He raised thee

out of the bed of nothing, thou hadst, to this moment, lain sleeping in it, not knowing any, nor known by any; and what should move God to put forth His everlasting arms, and bring thee out of this barren womb? Was it because thou lovedst Him? Poor creature! Thou who wast not, how couldst thou love? Or, if thou hadst loved any thing, certainly nothing less than Him, Who was infinitely contrary, yea contradictory to thine eternal nothingness. Yet, though thou couldest not love Him, yet He could, and did love thee; yea, He so loved thee that hadst no being, that He gave thee a being, wherein to love Himself: a being, I say, not that of plants or brutes, but He endowed thee with a rational soul, upon the face whereof He stamped His Own image, giving thee an understanding whereby to know Him, a will whereby to choose Him, affections whereby to love Him that gave them all unto thee. So that, as, if He had not made thee, thou couldst have been nothing; so, unless He had enabled thee, thou couldst never have loved any thing. It was He that gave thee that very affection of love, which thou now ungratefully placest upon other things more than Him. Had not He given thee that passion, thou couldst not have loved any thing: how much then art thou bound to love God more than every thing, seeing without Him thou couldst have loved nothing! Oh then remember, God loved you before you was, do you love God now you are; and seeing He so loved you as to give you beings, do you so love Him as to improve your beings for Him.

2. As He raised you out of nothing, so it is He that still keeps you in your beings. It was He alone that did create you; and it is He alone that can preserve you. So that thou art as unable to keep thyself from falling down from thy being unto nothing now, as thou wast to raise thyself from nothing unto a being before. As he made all things by the power of His Word, so it is He that “upholds all things by the Word of His power.” Had not He put His everlasting arms under thee, thou hadst never risen up from nothing; and should He take away His everlasting arms from thee, thou wouldst again fall down to nothing. So that every moment of thy life is a monument of His love. Neither is it He only that upholdeth thee, but it is He that

Heb. 1. 3.  
[Deut. 33.  
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continues all the faculties of thy soul, and members of thy body. It is He by Whom thou knowest any thing, by Whom thou willest any thing, by Whom thou desirest any thing, by Whom thou enjoyest any thing, and by Whom thou lovest any thing. Thou couldst have had nothing to love, unless He had given it thee, neither couldst thou love it now thou hast it, unless He enabled thee. Oh, then, how infinitely art thou engaged to love Him above all things, without Whom thou couldest neither have any thing to love, nor love any thing thou hast; without Whom neither thou that lovest it, nor the thing thou lovest, could continue one moment in its being!

3. As it is He that preserves you in your beings, so it is He that protects you from evil; without Him thou couldst not but fall down to nothing; and without Him all evil would fall down upon thee: it is He alone Who gives good things to thee; and it is He alone Who withholdeth evils from thee. Oh, how many unseen dangers doth He continually keep us from! How often had that roaring lion, the Devil, before now devoured us, had not the Lion of the tribe of Judah rescued us! How oft have we been upon the brink of ruin; but that it was God that kept us from falling in! How art thou engaged to God for every good thing thou hast, and for every evil thing thou hast not. It is of His mercy that thou art preserved, and it is of His mercy that thou art not consumed: unless He had loved thee more than thou lovest Him, there is nothing that is good, but would have been kept from thee; there is nothing that is evil, but would have been thrown upon thee. It is only from Him that thou art here, and not upon thy sick-bed; here, and not in prison; yea, here, and not in Hell. Neither is it He only that defends thee from temporal, but from spiritual evils; for without God, as there is no misery but would fall upon thee, so there is no sin but thou wouldst fall into. Art thou not a murderer? Art thou not an adulterer? Art thou not a drunkard? Art thou not a thief? Yea, art thou not a blasphemer? Art thou not an atheist? Not to thyself, not to thyself, but to the Name of God give the praise and glory. For as it is only God's constraining grace that enableth thee to do the good thou dost; so it

is only God's restraining grace that prevents thee from doing the evil thou dost not. And therefore thou art bound to love God both for what thou art, and for what thou art not; for what thou dost, and for what thou dost not.

4. It is He also that directs thee in all thy ways, and prospers thee in thy undertakings. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." No, it is God only that directs our steps for us. When thou art in doubts and perplexities, and knowest not which way to take, it is God that is as a voice behind thee, saying, "This is the way, walk in it;" it is He that enlightens thy understanding, quickens thy apprehensions, and directs thy thoughts, ordering the spirits in thy brain, that those may occur which are most advantageous and beneficial. If thou beest rich, it was He that directed thee to the means thou wert to use, and then prospered thee in the using of them. And whatsoever thy condition now be, the whole chain of causes, and series of Providences, that hath brought thee from thy mother's womb unto what thou art, was ranged and managed only by His almighty power: so that thou art nothing, thou dost nothing, thou hast nothing, but what thou art beholden for. Is it by thy labour and industry that thou hast gotten thy estate? Who was it that made thee thus laborious and industrious, but God? Is it by thy gifts and parts that thou art advanced to preferments? Who was it that gave thee those gifts and parts, but God? Hast thou great friends, and many lovers in the world? Who was it that made them thy friends and lovers but God? It was He that gave Joseph favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. It was He that brought Daniel into favour, and love, with the prince of the eunuchs. So that as without Him we could not love others, so without Him others would not love us. And, therefore, the more others love thee, the more art thou bound to love God.

5. As if all this was nothing, God, to manifest Himself still further to thee, came down from His blessed throne, clothed Himself with flesh, became subject to His Own creatures, yea, and unto death itself, and all to redeem thee from it. Oh glorious condescension! Oh ravishing expression of Divine love! That eternity should stoop to time, Heaven come down to earth, glory be wrapped in



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[Ps. 8. 4.]

misery; that God Himself should become man, and all to reconcile man to Himself! "Oh what is man that thou shouldest be thus mindful of him, or the Son of man that thou shouldest be thus merciful to him!" Who are we, or what was our father's house, that God Himself should not only become man, but suffer for us, and undergo cruelties, reproaches, and stripes from those that could not lay them upon Him, did not He at the same time enable them! That he should be condemned by such as could not pronounce the sentence against Him, did not Himself vouchsafe them breath to do it! Yea, that He should suffer death from them that borrowed their lives from Him! Oh, how can you think of these things, and keep your hearts within your breasts? How are we able to consider how much God hath done for us, and not burn in love to Him? Oh ye that love yourselves, your sins, your lusts, your friends, your lives, or any thing more than God, behold the Most High Himself mocked, despised, spit upon, crowned with thorns, drinking gall and vinegar, and, last of all, undergoing the pangs of death, and all to redeem you to the joys of love! Consider, I say, these things, and then tell me, whether He doth not infinitely deserve your love more than the things that have it? Consider that He assumed thy nature, that thou mightest partake of His; He became the Son of Man, that thou mightest become the son of God; He hungered, that He might feed thee with His Own flesh; and thirsted, that He might give thee to drink of His Own blood; He was apprehended, that thou mightest be secure; derided, that thou mightest be honoured; condemned, that thou mightest be absolved; and crowned with thorns here, that thou mightest be crowned with glory hereafter: He came from Heaven to earth, that thou mightest go from earth to Heaven: yea, "He that knew no sin was made sin for us, that we that know nothing but sin, might be made the righteousness of God in Him:" He Who was innocent was punished, that thou who art guilty mightest be pardoned; He was crucified, that thou mightest be glorified; He Who had lived in Heaven from eternity, came and died on earth in time, that we, who die on earth in time, might go and live in Heaven to eternity. Oh, how canst thou muse of these things, and the fire not burn within

[2 Cor. 5.  
21.]

in thee? Where is thy heart that thou dost not throw it, all on flames with love, at the foot of that God that hath done so much for thee?

Sixthly. He did not only come down once to die for thee, but He is still pleased to come down and live within thee: He did not only assume our human, but we partake of His [2 Pet. 1. 4.] Divine nature. And if it be an honour for the king to remove a subject to his court, what an honour is it to remove his court to his subject! If it be an honour for God to take us up to live with Him, oh what an honour is it for Him to come down and live in us! Yet this honour have all His Saints: "Know ye not," saith the Apostle, "that ye 1 Cor. 3. 16. are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Oh what expression of love can you desire more from God, or God bestow more on you? But tell me, my brethren, seeing He that inhabits eternity vouchsafeth also to come and dwell in you, what can you do less than receive Him into the uppermost corner of your hearts, and entertain Him with the choicest of your affections? Seeing He is pleased to live in you, how can you forbear loving of Him?

Seventhly. Consider further what God hath laid up for you in Heaven, as well as what He hath vouchsafed to you on earth. His mercies upon earth are infinitely more than you deserve; but the glory He hath prepared for you in Heaven, is infinitely greater than you can imagine; "For 1 Cor. 2. 9. eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." So that the delights of Heaven shall not only be greater than we as yet enjoy, but higher than we as yet can fancy; and therefore expect not that I should describe them to you: for, was I able to describe them, they would be infinitely less than they are; no, all that I can tell you of them is, that they are greater than I am able to tell you of. Only this we know, that those joys of Heaven will as much transcend our expectations, as the pleasures upon earth deceive them: for there certainly we shall have infinitely more than we can here desire, yea, there we shall enjoy more happiness than here we are capable of; for our capacities shall there be enlarged as well as filled: so that we shall be capable of enjoying more, as well as enjoy as

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much as we are capable of. Oh, my brethren, you that, like worms, are still creeping and crawling upon earth, conversing with nothing but dust and clay, you little think of the joys that they are transported with, who are admitted into the court of Heaven, and made partakers of those transcendent glories. You little think what it is to see God face to face, and to bathe yourselves in those rivers of pleasure, “which are at His right hand for evermore.” Would the Great God be pleased to open you a casement into this glorious palace, and give your souls but the least glimpse of these ravishing, delightful glories, I dare say thou wouldst be a thousand times more desirous of Heaven than ever thou wast of any thing upon earth. Thou wouldst even melt away into holy longings, and thirstings, and pantings after those things, which as yet thou slightest and disregardest. And verily, for all the low undervaluing thoughts you have as yet of Heaven, so as to prefer the seeming pleasures upon earth before it, assure yourselves, if God shall be ever pleased to bring you to it, you will be of another mind. Nay, let me tell you, you must be of another mind before you are ever likely to come there; much more, when you shall once be possessed of the actual enjoyment of those transcendent glories, which I am as unable to express, as desirous to enjoy, you will then think the highest of your affections infinitely too low for that God Who hath provided such mansions for you.

Eighthly. If thy frozen heart be not as yet dissolved into love and affection to the Great God, for these wonderful expressions of His love to thee; consider His ends in all these things: alas! He aims at nothing in all this for Himself, but all for thee. It is He only that does the work, but it is we only that receive the gains. For before the world or any part of it had a being, God was brimfull of glory, infinitely happy in the enjoyment of Himself, being all joy and bliss, all honour and glory, yea all things desirable to Himself: so that before He had made His creatures, He stood in no need of them; and now He hath made them, He is never the better for them: He was infinitely happy in Himself before, and cannot be more happy in us now. Neither did He make creatures out of any such design, to

be any thing advanced in His happiness by them, or to receive any accessions of glory from them; but merely out of His Own essential goodness, which is naturally communicative of itself, even as the sun is naturally diffusive of its light, though he get nothing by it. And therefore, whether thou beest damned, He is not the worse, or whether thou beest saved, He is never the better for it. But howsoever, out of His Own intrinsical goodness He hath made thee; and upon the same account is desirous to make thee happy; and if thou acceptest of the overtures of grace He makes thee, it is thou that receivest the happiness, not He. It is true, He is the good husbandman that breaks up the fallow ground of thy heart, and sows the seed of grace in it: it is He also that waters, and weeds, and dresseth it, and causeth it to spring up and flourish; but, when all is done, it is thou only that reapest and receivest the whole crop of glory from it. And therefore thou must not think, that He hath any ends in loving thee; He only loves thee, because He loves thee. And now that He calls upon thee to love Him, it is not because He wants thy love, but because thyself wantest it: for it is no addition to His glory, but it is the perfection of thine to love Him with all thy heart. Oh, how art thou able to consider these things, and not be forced to cry out with the spouse in the Canticles, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love?" Deut. 7. 8. Can. 2. 5.

[II.] Secondly, Neither doth God only deserve your love because He hath been so loving unto you, but especially because He is infinitely lovely in Himself. And certainly, though God doth give us leave to love Him for these astonishing instances of His goodness to us, yet He requires us especially to love Him for that bottomless ocean of goodness that is in Himself. And, verily, for all the low apprehensions that we may have of the Eternal Deity, did it but please the Most High God to open our eyes, and shew us that glory that shines round about us at this time, how should we all lie grovelling in the dust before Him, and our souls be melted into holy desires and pantings after Him!

When the Syrians came to Dothan, the servant of the Prophet Elisha could see nothing but the chariots, and horses, and hosts of the Syrians; but when God had



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opened his eyes, "Behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." So here, you look about you from place to place, but can see nothing but your fellow-creatures about you: but if God would be pleased but to open your eyes, as He did the servant of Elisha's, "Behold the place is full of horses, and chariots of fire," yea, it is full of the glory of the Great God; Whom if we could but see, how would our hearts be even snatched from us, and our souls transported wholly into flames of love! And though these ravishments of love from the sight of God, may seem paradoxes and mysteries to deluded mortals; yet, certainly, could you and I but look upon this glorious object with the same eyes wherewith Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Peter and Paul, and the rest of the Celestial Hierarchy, do continually, and at this very moment behold Him, how should we all be raised beyond our former selves! How should we immediately throw our melted, ravished, inflamed hearts at the feet of such transcendent glory! Certainly, did we thus behold Him, we should be as much unable to keep off our affections from Him, as now we are to draw them up unto Him; and it would be as impossible, as it is unjust, to let any thing come into competition with Him.

I know you expect I should speak something in particular, in the praise of those amazing, and enamouring perfections that are in God, which thus deserve the choicest of our affections from us; but verily you must excuse me; for I am conscious to myself, that my highest celebrations of them would be but as so many detractions from them. Only let me tell you this in general, if ever it shall please this, the Chiefest Good, to discover Himself unto you, and display His glory before you, you will find Him to be the Source of Wisdom, the Abyss of Goodness, the Rule of Holiness, the very Centre of all Perfections; One Who doth not only possess infinite perfections, but One in Whom every perfection is infinite; One so amiable, so desirable, so pure, so perfect, so altogether lovely, that had we no relation to Him, had we received no expressions of love from Him, yet His bare essence, His native excellencies, could not but make us ravished and enamoured with Him; one so altogether lovely,

that the glorified Angels, from the beginning of the world to this moment, could see nothing, either in or out of Him, to lessen their affections to Him : yea, One Whom to behold, and love, and praise, will be our happiness for evermore ; and therefore, One Whom, though thou shouldst sift and rack thy brains to Eternity to find out some exceptions against Him, or some excuse for thy withholding thy affections from Him, it would be impossible.

And, therefore, be it known unto you, that every soul amongst you that doth not love God above all things, therefore does it not, because he doth not know Him. For as thou canst not love Him unless thou knewest Him, thou couldst not but love Him, if thou knewest Him. Let not the deceitful world then cheat thee any longer of thy affections : but let Him be the Centre who was the Author of them. Dote no longer upon these childish gewgaws, but fix thy love upon the Chiefest Good. And seeing He hath called for thy heart from thee, what canst thou do but throw it before Him, all open, all melted, all on fire, with love unto Himself, without keeping back the least spark of love to any thing else, but only in subordination unto Him ? Raise up therefore thy affections to Him, and fix thy love continually upon Him, never give over heaving at thy heart, until thou hast gotten it up to Him, Who so infinitely deserves the choicest of thy affections, not only for those expressions of love, which He hath shewn to thee, but for those attractives of love, which are all concentred in Himself.

## SERMON CXLI.

RELIGION THE HAPPINESS OF ANY PEOPLE.

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PSALM cxliv. 15.

*Yea, happy is that People whose God is the Lord.*

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THAT supreme and all-glorious Being which we call God, as He is the Creator and Preserver of all things, that issueth forth from Himself continually both Essence and Existence to every thing that is ; so He cannot but be acknowledged likewise to be the universal Governor of the world, the first and supreme orderer and disposer of all and every thing in it ; for He being the cause of all causes, and the principle of all motion whatsoever, it is impossible that any thing should act or move without Him ; insomuch, that there is not the least thing imaginable can happen to any nation in general, or to any particular person in the world, but exactly according to His will and pleasure. Indeed, the whole world is but one great empire or kingdom, whereof the Lord Jehovah is the sole King or Monarch ; He gives laws, administers justice, and manageth all the affairs in it, as Himself sees good. This kingdom of His, although it be but one entire monarchy, yet it is ordinarily divided into two parts or circles, the upper and the lower, the one called Heaven, and the other earth. In Heaven, the far greatest part of His kingdom, where His Honour and Majesty in a more peculiar manner resides, and keeps His court ; there He hath myriads of Angels, Archangels, Cherubims, Seraphims, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, and Powers, all subject to His supre-

macy and command; which some of them presuming to oppose, they were soon banished from that higher orb, and cast down into these lower regions of the world, where they have been ever since confined, and reserved for chains of darkness at the great day. And as many of the inhabitants of Heaven, so, by their instigation, all the dwellers upon earth, have rebelled against the universal Monarch of the world, whereby they are become obnoxious to the severest penalties that His justice can inflict upon them; insomuch, that He might justly condemn them all to the same torments that are prepared for the Apostate Angels, or, if He please, reduce them into nothing. Howsoever, out of His Divine clemency, He still vouchsafeth to continue them in their beings upon earth for some considerable time, to see whether they will return to their allegiance to Him or no; which that they might do, although He suffers them to walk in their own ways, nevertheless He never left “Himself without witness” among them, “in that He did” them “good, and gave” them “rain from Heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling” their “hearts with food and gladness,” as the Apostle argues. But their depraved natures being so mischievous and unruly, that they are prone to ruin and destroy each other; hence it hath pleased the Most High God, by His all-wise providence, to form them into several nations and societies of men, entrusting some one or more persons amongst them with some of His Own power and authority over them, so that He might restrain them from committing injuries and violence upon one another, by one or more taken from amongst themselves, and differing in nothing from them, but only in the exercise of that power and dominion over them, which God in His providence hath conferred upon them. [Jude 6.] Acts 14. 17.

Thus far it pleaseth the Supreme Governor of the world to take care of all mankind, that they may live for the most part quietly and peaceably together; and without any disturbance or interruption from one another, contemplate His infinite wisdom, power, and goodness in the works of creation and providence; and by that means either be induced to admire, adore, and obey Him that is the Author of them, or else be rendered inexcusable before Him. But besides



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this His general care and providence over all the nations upon earth, He hath always been pleased to express a particular respect and kindness to some people more than to others, so as, in a more appropriate and peculiar manner, both to style and to manifest Himself to be their God. And although all others are far more happy than they deserve to be, in the enjoyment of these earthly comforts which God in His general providence scatters promiscuously among them, yet they who have the Lord in a more peculiar manner to be their God, cannot but be happy in a more peculiar manner than others are. This is that which the Psalmist in my text takes special notice of; for, having been speaking of temporal blessings, he asserts in the former part of this verse, that they who enjoy them, are in some sense happy; "Happy," saith he, "is that people that is in such a case," viz. who flourish in all manner of outward peace and prosperity; such, saith he, are happy at least in the esteem of men, as the fathers generally interpret the words, following the Greek translation, that render them by ἐμακάρισαν τὸν λαόν, "they account those people happy that have such things as these:" but then the Psalmist by way of correction adds, "Happy are the people whose God is the Lord;" intimating, that they who have the Lord to be their God, are happy in a more peculiar manner than others either are or can be.

In speaking to which words, I suppose it superfluous to observe unto you, that the word people, the subject of this proposition, is not to be understood of any particular person or persons considered by themselves, or distinctly from others, but of a political body, or society of men living together under the same civil government; for this you all know to be the common meaning and purport of the word, both in sacred and profane writings. Neither shall I discourage your attention with any critical or metaphysical notions and speculations concerning that glorious person here called the Lord, or Jehovah; only I would desire you, that whensoever you hear me mention that sacred Name, you would still apprehend nothing less than the Supreme Being of the world signified by it: Him that made, maintains, governs, and disposeth of all things whether in heaven or earth, according to His Own will and pleasure.

But there are three things necessary to be considered in order to the clear understanding of these words; first, in what sense any nation or people may be said to have the Lord for their God: secondly, upon what account the Lord is pleased to be the God of some people in a more particular manner than of others: thirdly, wherein they who have the Lord for their God are more happy than other people.

I. The first of these is a question which we are all very highly concerned to understand; for many people are very apt to talk and boast much of the Lord's being their God, while in the meanwhile they know not what themselves mean by it; for it is certain that the Lord is the God of all the world, He is "the God both of heaven and earth," as ch. v. 11. Ezra styles him; for all things were made by Him, and all things subsist continually by Him. And, therefore, as He is the Lord of heaven, so is He called too the God of "the Isa. 54. 5. whole earth," and by consequence, of all the people in it. But how then can He be said to be the God of one people more than of another?

If we consult the Jews, who certainly were once a people that had the Lord for their God in the sense we are now speaking of, their opinion is, and always was, that there is a twofold providence of God to be considered in the world; the one they call *השגחה כללית*, the other *השגחה פרטית*, that is, a 'general' and a 'special' providence. By His 'general providence,' they say, that although God takes notice of the actions of each nation and of every person in it, that so He may recompense all men according to their doings, yet as to the government of such nations which Himself hath no particular relation to as their God, that they say He doth not exercise immediately from Himself, but by the ministry of Angels whom he deposes as His vicegerents under Him, to order and revenge them according to the course of natural causes, established at the creation of the world; by which means they are subject to the influences of the stars and planets, of which it is said, that "the Lord divided them to all the nations under the whole heaven." Deut. 4. 19. And all the world being anciently divided into seventy nations or provinces, the Lord, according to their opinion, set seventy Angels over them, to be their lords and governors under Him, which they

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therefore call סנדרין שלמעלה, the Sanhedrin, or senate, that is above. This opinion they ground upon Deut. xxxii. 8, where it is said, "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel;" which words Jonathan in his Targum or Chaldee paraphrase upon the place, interprets to this purpose, "That when the Most High divided the world among the people that sprang of the sons of Noah, in the age when tongues were divided, at that time He divided the people of the world by lot among seventy Angels, according to the number of the children of Israel which went down into Egypt, which were seventy:" so that from this time they say, the Lord, by reason of their sins, took no particular care of these nations, but left them to the government of the Angels, Himself exercising no more than His general providence among them.

Exod. 1. 5.

Deut. 32. 12.

But as for his 'special providence,' that they say was appropriated to the seed of Abraham, which the Lord was pleased to choose for His Own province or portion, to rule and govern them immediately by His Own infinite wisdom and power, so as not to suffer any of the common Angels to have any power over them as they had over other nations, but to look to them Himself, according to that of Moses speaking of Israel, "So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him." Thence therefore, they say, the Lord was in a peculiar manner the God of Israel, because He governed other nations only by His general, them by His special providence; He constituted the Angels to be the Gods as they are called in Scripture, or the governors of other nations, but Himself was the God or Governor of Israel, whom He therefore called His Own people.

This opinion of the Jews, as to the substitution of Angels in the government of the nations upon earth, hath no certain foundation in Scripture, though some of the fathers seem to have embraced it; but as to God's general and special providence, so far it is certainly true, that God hath always had a more especial care of some nations or people, than He hath had of others; as it is plain He had of the Jews all along in the Old Testament, who are therefore frequently called His lot,

His portion, His inheritance, His treasure, His סגלה, His special or peculiar people, because of that special and peculiar care he was pleased to take of them, doing far more for them than for any other nation in the world besides, as Moses declared to them. Nay, it is observable that He had so great a care of His Own more than for other people, that whilst He governed other nations only by His general providence, or the ordinary course of natural causes, for His people Israel's sake he was oft-times pleased to alter the very laws and course of nature. For their sakes He divided the waters of the Red Sea, and of Jordan too, that they might go through afoot; for their sakes He broached the rocks, and dissolved the very flints into floods of water: for their sakes He caused it to rain manna for forty years together, to feed them in the deserts of Arabia: and all that while He suffered neither their clothes nor their shoes to wax old; for their sakes He caused the sun to stand still, and the stars in their courses to fight against Sisera; for their sakes He commanded the walls of Jericho to fall down at the sound of the trumpets, and the Midianites to sheathe their swords in each other's bowels. And many such extraordinary things He was pleased to do for His people Israel, which He never did for any other nation in the world; which clearly shews the particular kindness and respect which He had for them above all other people. Deut. 4. 32, 34.

Hence therefore it is, that although He be indeed the God of the whole world, yet He is frequently in Scripture called in a peculiar manner the God of Israel. He is never called the God of Edom, the God of Moab, the God of Greece or Persia, or the God of any other people, but only of Israel. Whence also it is, that although as to His essence He be really every where alike, yet He is often said in an especial manner to dwell in Sion at Jerusalem, and amongst His people; which cannot possibly be understood of His essential presence only; for He dwelleth in all places, one as well as another; but it must of necessity be understood of His special presence, whereby He is present with them in a more especial manner than He is among other people. And if you should ask me, How it is possible that God's omnipresence should be thus determined to one place more than to



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another? I answer, It is by His *satellitium*, His retinue or guard of holy Angels which continually attend upon Him. Whithersoever He sends them, there Himself is said to be in a more peculiar manner present; as might easily be demonstrated from several places of Scripture, where His special presence or residence is spoken of. And this His heavenly retinue always attending by His order upon those whom He chooseth for His Own people, hence He is said to dwell amongst them in a more peculiar manner than He doth amongst other people.

Thus therefore you see how the Lord is said to be the God of one people more than another, by taking a particular care of them, and vouchsafing His special or peculiar presence among them. In this sense Theodoret understands these words of my text, "The people whose God is the Lord," expounding them by λαὸν ὑπὸ Θεοῦ προμηθεύμενον, the people whom God takes care of in a more special manner than He doth of other people; for by this means, although He be the God of all the world, yet seeing He manifesteth Himself to be so by exerting His Divine wisdom, power, and goodness in their behalf in a peculiar manner, He may be justly said in a peculiar manner to be their God, and they may be truly termed a people "whose God is the Lord."

II. The second question I propounded is, Upon what account the Lord is pleased to be the God of some people in a more peculiar manner than of others? For the understanding of which, I shall lay down these propositions.

First, The Lord being of "purer eyes than to behold evil," so soon as mankind had rebelled against Him, and was become sinful and corrupt, He presently cast off that particular care which otherwise He would have taken of them; He left them (as we say) to the wide world, to shift for themselves as well as they could; but He would have no more to do with them, than only to maintain the established laws of nature by which they should subsist; by which means, not being able to help themselves, they all became subject, not only to the chances and misfortunes of this world, but likewise to perpetual misery and torment.

Secondly, Hence the Son of God, out of His infinite compassion to mankind, was pleased to intercede for them, to

[Ad Ps. 143.  
tom. 1. p.  
1558. ed.  
Schulze.]

[Hab. 1.  
13.]

undertake to expiate their sins, and to see that at least a great part of them should return to their former obedience.

Thirdly, Upon this, the Most High God, for His Son's sake, was pleased to condescend so far as to capitulate with mankind, and to enter into a covenant with them, that notwithstanding their former miscarriages, if they would now "repent" and "turn" unto Him, He would still be "their God," and take as much care of them as if they had never sinned.

Fourthly, This covenant was first entered into with Adam, and so with all mankind, which then was not only represented but contained in him; but the tenure of it being soon forgotten, by reason of the corruption of man's nature, God was pleased afterwards to ratify and renew it again, not with all mankind in general, as He did at first, but in a particular manner with Abraham and his seed, of whom Christ, in whom the covenant was made, should be afterwards born; for to him God expressly said, "And I will establish Gen. 17. 7. My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." This is the first place in all the Scriptures wherein God promiseth in express terms to be a God to any people. Afterwards indeed, He often repeated the same thing by His Prophets, saying, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people:" but they were only as the transcripts of this covenant; this was the original copy, the first grant here made to Abraham and to his seed.

Fifthly, The seed of Abraham, with whom this covenant was made, is to be understood in a double sense. First, his 'natural seed' by his son Isaac, in that line from which Christ, the foundation of the covenant, should afterwards spring according to the flesh; and so by virtue of this covenant, all the children of Israel, the sons of Isaac, even the whole Jewish nation, were God's peculiar people, and the Lord their God in a peculiar manner, above all the nations in the world besides. They were His flock that He took particular care of, whilst other nations were as wild beasts, wandering about in the woods and deserts, without having any shepherd or governor to look to them, as the Jews all

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along had. For the Lord according to His promise was their God; He kept, preserved, and governed them by His special providence all along, until by reason of their idolatries and rebellions He was forced to cast them off.

But besides this, the natural seed of Abraham according "to the flesh," this promise was made likewise to his 'seed according to "the faith;"' that is, to all such as believed in God as Abraham did: for "they which are of the faith, the same are the children of Abraham;" so saith the Apostle. From whence it is plain, that they who are of the faith, that is, who sincerely believe in Christ, so as to come up to the terms propounded in this general covenant, they also are reckoned as Abraham's seed, and comprehended in this covenant, wherein the Lord promised to be a God to him, and to his seed after him; for all such are Christ's true Disciples; "and if they be Christ's, then are they Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise," that is, according to the promise He made to Abraham, and to his seed; not only to such as should proceed from him by natural propagation, but to such likewise, as by the faith of Christ should be adopted into his family, and so inherit the same promise, whatsoever people or nation they were of; by which means, although God's ancient people the Jews be now disinherited, He hath still a peculiar people in the world, who have the Lord for their God, by the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, in Whom this covenant was first made, and with Whose blood it is sealed and confirmed to them.

But now they, who have the Lord to be their God, are not confined as formerly to any one particular nation; "but in every nation, he that feareth the Lord, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him;" and whatsoever nation or people in the world doth sincerely profess the faith of Christ, and obey His Gospel, and duly perform that worship and homage which they owe to God, that nation He takes particular care of. As they are His people to serve and honour Him, so He is their God to rule and govern them; so that He now saith to all people, as He said once to Israel, "If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people." Yea, although the greatest part of any

nation be refractory and debauched, yet if the true religion be but established, and real piety encouraged in it, and if there be but any considerable number of persons in it that truly fear and obey God, for their sakes He will take special care of the whole nation where they live, that they may be provided of all things necessary for life and godliness. For so it was oft-times with the Jewish nation; insomuch that the Prophet Elijah knew of none in his time but himself that worshipped the true God: and amongst the many hundred thousands that were then in the land, God Himself could reckon but seven thousand souls that had not bowed the knee to Baal; yet for all that He was still pleased to continue His special providence and care over them: neither did He ever cast them off so long as “there were any remnant of the election of grace amongst them,” as the Apostle argues. But when once they totally revolted from Him, and utterly refused the overtures of grace that He made them in the Gospel of Christ, then He presently cast them off, and called them *Lo Ammi*, “They are none of My people, nor I their God;” from whence it plainly appears upon what account the Lord is the God of any people. Even if any people or nation sincerely endeavour to serve, honour, and obey Him, them He for Christ Jesus’ sake is pleased to accept of as His Own peculiar people, so as to style Himself, and to be in a peculiar manner their God. [1Kings 19.  
10. 18.]

Rom. 11. 5.

[Hosea 1.  
9.]

III. And so I come to the last thing I promised to shew, even wherein the people whose God is the Lord, are an happy people, happy in a peculiar manner above other people. The question is not, whether they be happy or no? for that I suppose none here present can make any question of; but wherein it is, that this their peculiar happiness doth principally consist. What, are they greater, or richer, or more victorious than other people? No; their happiness is of another and a far higher nature, consisting in nothing less than in having the Lord Himself, the Supreme Governor of the world, to take care of them, and to provide all things needful for them; so that whilst other people are subject to the various changes and chances of this deceitful world, they are sure never to want any thing that is really good for them, nor yet to have any real evil to befall them;



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for all the infinite and Divine perfections of God Himself are jointly engaged for their good and welfare. They have His wisdom to instruct them, His power to protect them; His mercy to pardon them; His grace to adorn them here; and His glory to crown them for ever: and all because they have the Lord Himself for their God; not only for their light, their life, their hope, their help, their strength, their tower, their sun, their shield, and their exceeding great reward, but for their God; which is infinitely more than can be couched under any other expression whatsoever. What can those persons lack who are thus related to, and interested in Him that is all things in Himself? And if we speak of a nation or people in general, the proper subject of our discourse, if they have the Lord for their God, what can He not do for them that He will? and what will He not do for them that He can? Consider but His people Israel, what care did He take of them wheresoever they were! Consider them in Egypt, where He had brought them into bondage the better to fit them for Himself, what signs and wonders did He there work for their redemption! such as Pharaoh

[Ex. 8. 19.] himself could not but acknowledge to be done by the finger of God, that is, by His special providence and extraordinary power. Consider them in the Red Sea; there you may see the waters recoiling back to make way for them, and as soon as they were out, returning again to overwhelm their enemies. Consider them in the Wilderness; there you may see the Lord Himself marching before them in a pillar of a cloud by day, and of fire by night, to direct them in the way to Canaan. Consider them in the Land of Canaan; how triumphantly did they march there from place to place! No city, no king, no nation or people whatsoever, being able

Ps. 105. 15. to stand before them. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, He suffered no man to do them wrong, yea, He reprov'd kings for their sakes, saying, "Touch not Mine Anointed, and do My Prophets no harm," such a tender care had He always over His Own people. Consider them in Babylon, whither He in mercy brought them to humble them for their sins; even there He was mindful of them, and the day which was designed for their destruction, He miraculously turned it into

a day of joy and feasting to them, which they ever after kept by the name of "Purim." And when the time of their deliverance was come, how strangely did He incline the heart of that very prince, whose captives they were, to send them home again to rebuild their temples and city! Indeed the expressions of His particular kindnesses and favour for Israel were so great, so many, and so evident unto all, that none can read their histories but must needs acknowledge, that God had a greater care of them than He had of any other, or all the nations in the world besides. Especially considering, that they were the only people who were entrusted with the oracles of God; they were the only people to whom God sent His Prophets to instruct them in the way to Heaven; they were the only people that had their sacrifices to expiate their sins, and their Sacraments to confirm their faith; in a word, they were the only people to whom God was pleased to manifest Himself, to reveal His Will, to foretell the Messiah, and to direct them in the path that leads to everlasting life; and all, because they were His people, and He their God. How well then might the Psalmist say, "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord;" or as He doth elsewhere, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom He hath chosen for His Own inheritance!"

But then, you will say, What is all this to us? What! It is certainly a matter of the greatest consequence that it is possible for me to preach, or you to hear of upon this occasion. For all you who are here assembled, profess and believe yourselves to be in the number of God's people, of such a people whose God is the Lord; and, blessed be His great Name for it, we have all just ground to believe it, from those clear and undoubted testimonies, which the Most High God hath given of His particular care and providence over this nation to which we belong, as much, if not much more than over any other nation in the world, the Jewish itself not at all excepted. For His deliverance of this nation from the yoke and servitude of Rome, was certainly as great a favour, as special a kindness, as His redemption of Israel from the Egyptian bondage. Our fifth of November is every whit as remarkable a day as their feast of "Purim;"

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and the restoration of our king to his throne, and of our Church to its primitive constitution, was as high and clear an instance of God's special providence, as the restitution of the Jewish church and state was from the Babylonish Captivity. Indeed, this one miraculous act of Divine Providence duly considered, with all the circumstances of it, is of itself sufficient to convince the most obstinate Jew in the world, as it hath done some, that the Lord hath manifested Himself to be the God of this nation, as really as ever He was of the Jewish, especially considering that this nation hath long enjoyed as great, if not far greater spiritual privileges than ever the Jews had. Did the Lord select them from other nations, to make known Himself, His law, and the way of Salvation to them? Hath He not done the same for us? How many nations are there in the world, who to this day know nothing of God or Christ, whilst we have all the mysteries both of the Law and Gospel revealed to us? Had they the Sacraments of Circumcision and the Paschal Lamb? We have the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, of which theirs were but types and shadows. Had they their priests, their altars, and their sacrifices for the expiation of their sins? We have them all and infinitely more in Christ, Who once offered up Himself, and is always making atonement for us. Had they their Prophets to acquaint them with God's will, and the way to happiness? We have all their Prophets and more, and greater too, even Christ, His Apostles and Ministers, to shew us the way to everlasting bliss. What shall I say more? There is scarce any thing that the Jews ever had, as God's peculiar people, but what England at this day enjoys in a more peculiar manner than they ever did.

And as it hath hitherto pleased the Most High God to be the God of this nation in general, so hath He been to the metropolis of it, this city in particular, not only in that you partake of all the special privileges which the whole nation is invested with, but chiefly because the people of this city have had particular instances of God's special providence peculiar to themselves; for God's special providence, you must know, is seen in the extraordinary judgments that He lays upon a people, as well as in the extraordinary mercies

that He vouchsafes unto them. As no people ever enjoyed such blessings as the Jews had, so no people under Heaven were so severely punished for their sins in this world as they were; and if you ask me the reason, it was because of that particular cognisance and care that God took of them, as Himself intimates unto them, saying, “ You only have I Amos 3. 2. known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” And are not you all sensible that the immediate hand of God hath been upon this city? Did God ever deal so with any city as He hath done with this, both as to His judgments upon it, and mercies towards it? Was ever city consumed by such a fire, and raised again in so short a time as this hath been? I am sure all the records of former times are not able to parallel or equal it in either; so that this city may be justly called now, as Jerusalem anciently was, the city of the living God, and the inhabitants thereof, a people whose God is the Lord.

And if so, what more necessary caution or admonition can be given to you, the governors and representatives of this city here assembled, than that you be truly thankful to the Most High God, for that particular care He is pleased to take of you, and that you take heed lest He cast you off, as He hath done Jerusalem, and His ancient people the Jews. They once were as you now are, the happiest people in the world, have a care lest you become as they now are, a people forsaken of God, and the common derision of mankind. And, let me tell you, you have but too much cause to fear it; the pride, the oppression, the contempt of God, the slighting of His public worship, the manifold heresies, schisms, and divisions that are so rife amongst you, threaten you severely with it: for the reigning of these and suchlike sins amongst you, is both the cause and the sign of God’s displeasure against you; and if they still continue with you, I fear you will soon find God to retire Himself, and withdraw His special providence from you; for He was never so fond of any people, but if they refused to worship and obey Him, He would refuse to protect and provide for them. If you will not be His people, He will not be your God; and therefore be advised to look to yourselves, and beware of every thing that you know to be offensive and displeasing



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unto God, lest otherwise you become as Sodom and Gomorrah, an astonishment and an hissing to all the world. God hath threatened you sufficiently already : it is not long since the far greatest part of your city lay in its ashes ; and if you will not take warning by what you have already felt, He hath a thousand times greater judgments still behind, and that is, [Rev. 2. 5.] to remove His candlesticks, and His special presence from among you, and to reject you utterly from being His people or inheritance, which He certainly will do ere long, unless you prevent it by your timely repentance and reformation ; for there are such crying sins in this city, for which God can never endure it long, nor delight to dwell in it, except it be amended. I shall not undertake to name them all, but I will mind you only of some few of those many sins which highly dishonour, and, by consequence, provoke the eternal God to remove you out of His sight.

First, therefore, how can you expect that He should continue to dwell amongst you, if you cannot afford Him so much as convenient and decent places for His peculiar residence, but whilst yourselves live in ceiled houses, His public worship must be, for the most part, performed in sheds and tabernacles ? Is this the thanks you give unto the Lord for the particular care He hath taken of you ? or, is this the way to prevail with Him to continue His special providence over you ? No, mistake not yourselves. Read but the first chapter of the prophecy of Haggai, and there you will find that God would never bless or prosper His Own people, but blow upon their labours, and blast whatsoever they had got, so long as His Own house lay waste. He would not manifest Himself to be their God, nor dwell amongst them until they had built Him an house to dwell in, a place for the public performance of their homage and devotions to Him. And you will find Him in the same mind now as He was then. Now He hath enabled you to rebuild your own houses, if you shall still neglect or delay to rebuild His, what can you expect but that He should cast you again into utter ruin and desolation ? Indeed, when I walk through the streets of the city, and view the famous halls and stately fabricks that are erected in it, and so many churches still lying in their rubbish, I cannot but wonder

within myself that the city hath stood so long as it hath done already since the rebuilding of it; until I bethink myself that God hath greater judgments to inflict upon it than the demolishing of its houses, even the casting off its inhabitants from being His people any longer, seeing they have so little regard to His service and worship; and therefore look not upon the sumptuous buildings, erected either upon public or private charges, look not upon them as any credit or ornament to the city; no, they are, and will be, its shame, reproach, and infamy, so long as any one church remains unbuilt. I am sure they are reckoned so by all truly sober and pious persons, both of this and of other nations; for, in plain terms, it argues that you take more care for the world than you do for God: but if you thus continue to be so regardless of Him, and His service, He will soon leave off to take care of your good and welfare.

But why do I speak so much of places to worship God in, when for aught I see there are but few that care whether they worship God or no, or at least not how they do it? How many are there amongst you, who disdain so much as to own or acknowledge God in public, and think they worship God best, when they express the least reverence or respect unto Him! Which is such a kind of worship that the world never heard of till our days, and God I am sure can never be pleased with it. Neither are they the only persons guilty of this crime; look into our public congregations themselves, how rare is it to find one that worships God "with reverence and godly fear," as we are <sup>[Heb. 12. 28.]</sup> expressly commanded to do! How careless and indifferent are men now grown in Divine Service, as if it was a matter of no consequence or importance at all! But hath not the Lord said, "I will be sanctified in them that draw nigh <sup>[Lev. 10. 3.]</sup> unto Me," that is, all that approach my Divine Majesty and presence, shall testify their acknowledgments of my power and supremacy over them? How then can you be said to sanctify or worship the Lord of Hosts, when you can sit as confidently before Him, and speak as malapertly to Him, as if He was your fellow-creature? Yet this is all the worship that the Lord hath commonly among us. But if you will not worship Him for the future with more fear

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and reverence, with more solemnity and devotion than heretofore you have done, He will soon find himself another people that shall.

[ver. 8.]

Moreover, what more common amongst us than with those “filthy dreamers” which the Apostle Jude speaks of, to despise dominion and speak evil of dignities? A disease which being contracted in the late rebellion, hath now overspread the whole nation, but hath infected no part of it so much as this city; where, in their ordinary discourse, men stick not to reproach and defame those whom the Lord their God hath by His special providence deputed to exercise power and authority over them. But this is such a sin, that doth not only directly thwart God’s Law, but strikes at His very Person; for what is done to His deputies, God accounts as done unto Him. As when the Israelites spoke against Samuel’s government, God saith expressly to him, “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them;” especially those who are God’s peculiar people, they having the Lord Himself, the Supreme Governor of the World for their God, He hath a particular hand in the election and constitution of their civil as well as of their ecclesiastical magistrates, ordering all their public affairs by his Own special providence; and therefore, if they offer to resist, contemn, or defame those whom He hath set over them, He looks upon Himself and His Own special providence as resisted, contemned, and defamed by them. And what if there should any real misdemeanours happen in the government of the city, you must not blame your governors, but yourselves for it; it is your own fault; you have offended and displeased your God, otherwise He would have inclined their hearts, and ordered their thoughts, their councils, and their resolutions, so as would have been most for your advantage; for “the heart of the king,” and so of every governor, “is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; He turneth it whithersoever He will.” Especially where He is pleased in a peculiar manner to be the God of any people, as He is to you, He over-rules all the counsels, and takes particular care of all the public affairs there; so that you may be confident nothing can happen to you but by His especial providence,

[1 Sam. 8.  
7.]

Prov. 21. 1.

whereof His Magistrates are but the instruments to convey it to you, and therefore you cannot despise them, but you must needs despise it too; which if you do, He will soon withdraw it from you, and be no longer your God.

There are many other sins too common among us, as blaspheming of God's Name, profanation of His Sabbath, neglecting of His Public Ordinances, drunkenness, uncleanness, perjury, cozenage, oppression, and many others, too many to be here named; which may justly provoke God to forsake and cast us off from being any longer His peculiar people: which therefore that He may not do, as it concerns you all to avoid them, so in a particular manner it concerns you, whom the Most High God is pleased to entrust with the government of this city, to use the utmost of your power and authority to restrain them. And verily you have both all the reason and encouragement in the world to do it, as considering from Whom you receive your power, and for what end it is conferred upon you; for, seeing the Lord Jehovah Himself, of His infinite mercy in Jesus Christ, is pleased to be the God of this land, and of this city in a peculiar manner, the constitution of all its magistrates and governors must needs be acknowledged to belong immediately unto Him. Though the election of them be in the commonalty, He disposeth their hearts and affections so as to choose whom He pleaseth; and seeing it is the Most High God Himself that investeth you with this power, you need not fear but whatsoever difficulties may occur, He will stand by you and assist you in the due execution of it. Be strong, therefore, and of a good courage <sup>[Deut. 31. 6.]</sup> in defending your Lord and Master's cause against His adversaries, even in suppressing all manner of vice and wickedness, and expelling it, if possible, from amongst His people; which if ye shall neglect to do, you will bear the sword in vain, and frustrate the end of your constitution. For, wherefore doth the Lord confer this power upon you, but that you should exercise it for Himself, in giving vice its condign punishment, as well as virtue its just reward? For the Apostle tells you, that you "are the ministers of God," His revengers to execute "wrath upon them that <sup>Rom. 13. 4.</sup> do evil." This is the work that He hath put into your



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hands, and you act but under Him in the doing of it. In His Name, therefore, and for His sake, set yourselves in good earnest upon the performance of this great trust that is committed to you, that so the Lord may still continue to be our God, and delight to dwell amongst us.

Which that He may do, let me also in His Name beseech and advise you all in your several places, degrees, and stations in the city, to endeavour to the utmost of your power to serve and please God ; content not yourselves any longer with the bare profession of that excellent religion you are baptized into, but live up unto the practice of it. Carry yourselves, as God's peculiar people indeed, zealous of good works, devoting yourselves, and all you have, wholly to His service and honour ; for that end, redress the evils before spoken of, provide yourselves places fit for so great, so holy, so divine a work, as the worshipping of your God, and therein perform your public devotions to Him with all manner of reverence and godly fear. Let fraud and avarice, pride and luxury, be expelled from among you ; and as for atheism and profaneness, irreligion and debauchery, let it not be so much as named amongst you. " Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Be ye loyal to your sovereign, submissive to your governors, and thankful for the care which under God they take of you. Be you kind and helpful to one another, faithful to your friends, loving to your enemies, charitable to the poor, and just to all. Oh, that we might once see this city thus flourishing in all true piety and virtue ! How happy should we then be ! so happy as still to be a " people whose God is the Lord."

Which God grant we may be, in, and through the merits of Jesus Christ, to Whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, both now and for ever.

[Heb. 12.  
14.]

## SERMON CXLII.

THE DUTY OF THINKING UPON GOD.

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PSALM x. 4.

*God is not in all his Thoughts.*

IF we consider man in his first estate, as he was designed and created by the eternal God, we may justly admire at the excellency of his composure and endowments; all the powers and faculties of his soul being so contrived, that they ran exactly parallel in their finite capacities to that infinite perfection of God Himself: so that he conceived of every thing as God conceives of it, understanding all things as far as his finite intellect could reach, as God understands them; willing only what He wills, loving what He loves, and rejoicing only in what He rejoiceth in: and though his soul was carried about in an earthly vehicle, yet it was noways clogged or hindered, much less diverted or seduced by it, his body being perfectly subject to, and punctually observing and following the motions of his soul; his superior and rational part exercising an entire dominion over the inferior and sensitive appetite, so that there was a perfect harmony betwixt God and man, His image and similitude being exactly portrayed and enstamped upon man, who by consequence was as pure, as holy, as wise, as good, as happy, every way as perfect, as the Angels themselves were, or any creature could possibly be.

But alas! where shall we now find such a man? Nowhere certainly, but in Heaven. For all mankind upon

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earth are quite another thing; being all so strangely corrupted and depraved both in their principles and practices, that they are every whit as simple and wicked, as they were at first made to be wise and holy. How strangely are all the faculties of our souls altered from their primitive constitution! Our understandings darkened, our judgments deceived, our consciences debauched, our wills perverted, our affections disordered, and by consequence, all the motions and acts of our souls turned upside down from what they were at first designed to be! Our sensitive appetites domineering and lording it over reason, our flesh warring against the spirit and subduing it too; so that instead of being like to God and His holy Angels, we are now degenerated into the likeness of the devils and impure spirits; so that generally, we are become as proud, as envious, as unjust, as malicious, every way as wicked and sinful, as much averse from good and inclined to evil, as the very fiends of hell themselves. Neither is it thus only with the more barbarous and savage part of mankind, that never had the oracles of God committed to them, nor the light of the Gospel shining upon them as we have had; but even amongst ourselves, who have the Scriptures, the Sacraments, the ordinances of Almighty God entrusted with us; who have His will and pleasure most clearly revealed unto us; who have the Gospel of Christ continually sounding in our ears; yet what impiety towards God, what contempt of His word, what irreverence in His presence, what uncharitableness to the poor, what pride and avarice, what hypocrisy and censoriousness, what wickedness and debaucheries of all sorts are to be seen commonly amongst ourselves! Insomuch, that we that pretend so much to know God, and enjoy the Gospel, are for the most part as wicked and impious as they that never heard either of God or Gospel.

When I thus consider sometimes seriously with myself the vast difference betwixt the primitive and degenerate estate of mankind, I cannot but wonder with myself, how it comes to pass, that we, who were made so conformable to the laws and nature of the chiefest good, should now become not unlike only, but altogether contrary to what we were; as much averse from good and inclined to evil, as ever we were averse from evil and inclined to good; and this too, notwithstanding

the clear knowledge that we have, or may have, of God Himself, and our duty to Him. And when I have searched and considered all things, I can find nothing which I can resolve this strange degeneracy of mankind so much into, as into their not thinking of God aright, as the great and principal cause of most of the actual sins which they indulge themselves in, and the chief reason, too, why our actual sins are so often multiplied into habits; even because, as David here saith, "God is not in all their thoughts;" so he here describes a wicked man, saying, *אין אלהים כל מציאתו*, "All his thoughts are that there is no God:" so these words may be expounded according to that other expression of the Psalmist, "The Ps. 14. 1. fool hath said in his heart there is no God." And therefore, saith he there, "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doth good:" but our translation seems to give the more proper interpretation of the words, "God is not in all his thoughts:" so the Syriac expressly renders them, "God is not in all of his thoughts;" with which the Arabic agrees in sense, translating them, "God is not before him." And so the Septuagint, *οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ Θεὸς ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ*, "God is never in his sight." For David is here describing a wicked man, and saith, "He is such a one as through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God; yea, that God is not in all his thoughts;" that is, he never thinks of God, nor regards and minds Him as he ought to do, but lives as without God in the world, as if he had neither God to serve, nor soul to save; as if there were neither any Hell to avoid, nor any Heaven to enjoy: he never troubles his thoughts with God Himself, nor with any thing that belongs to him. In speaking to which, I shall endeavour to shew how it comes to pass that men generally think so little of God, and then, that this is both a sign that they are wicked men, and a great cause too why they are so; and, by consequence, how we ought to think of God aright, and why we must do so if we desire to be good or holy, and not wicked and sinful.

I. First I say, How doth it come to pass that men generally have not God in all their thoughts? A question something difficult to be resolved; for, all things considered, one would think it almost if not altogether impossible that men should



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be able to forbear thinking of God, as considering that they live continually upon Him, and have nothing but what He gives them. They cannot move, nor act, nor speak, nor so much as think without Him; and therefore that God should not be in all their thoughts, notwithstanding all their thoughts proceed from Him, this is such a paradox, that we might justly suspect the truth of it, but that we see it so frequently verified by experience. And I suppose we need not go far for instances of this kind; there being too many, I fear, amongst ourselves, who can live, and move, and be a whole day together without ever so much as thinking of Him in whom “we live, and move, and have our being.” Yea, how many are there amongst us that never set themselves seriously to think of God all their life long; that spend day after day, week after week, year after year, in thinking upon other things, without ever thinking upon Him that gave the very power of thinking to them, and by Whom alone we are enabled to think of any thing; for which absurd and most unreasonable practice no reason imaginable can be alleged, why it should be indulged and continued as it is; but, howsoever, why it is so, these reasons may be given.

[Acts 17.  
28.]

1. First, because by the fall of our first parents, the understanding of mankind was so broken and distracted that they lost the true idea, and those clear conceptions of God, which otherwise they would have retained; for if these had been continued sound and whole, men could not but have been always thinking upon God, by reason of the constant and uninterrupted happiness and delight which they would have found in the contemplation of the Divine perfections, which would have been always fully and clearly represented to them. But their understandings growing dark and obscure, so as not to be able to apprehend the transcendent glory, beauty, and excellencies of the Divine nature, hence their thoughts were soon taken off from God, and scattered amongst His creatures; so that in the very first ages of the world, before the flood, “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually;” that is, his thoughts which he ought always to have fixed upon God, were continually roving about amongst those inferior and unlawful objects

Gen. 6. 5.

upon earth, and so were continually evil. So that men's thoughts being once taken off from God, they have ever since been mostly taken up with other things; neither can they ever be reduced to their proper centre again, without a great deal of care and pains about them, our thoughts being now grown so short and narrow, that they cannot without a great difficulty be extended and enlarged, so as to apprehend and contemplate an incomprehensible being.

2. Another reason why men generally spend their thoughts upon other things, so as seldom or never to think of God, is because God is not so evident to sense, nor seems so present to us as other things do; for although really nothing is or can be so near unto us as God, because it is in Him "that Acts 17. 28. we live, move, and have our being;" yet He seems a great way off to our distracted and disturbed fancies, which are rarely touched or affected with any thing but what is conveyed through the senses to them, and so make some sensible impression upon them. And hence it is, that the things here below, thus seeming nearer to us, and presenting themselves immediately to our senses, they are first and principally entertained in our thoughts, as constant guests, which we are so used to, that God Himself and all spiritual objects are strangers to us, and we do not love to be often troubled with them, thinking ourselves more concerned about what is present, than about what is future; about what we see with our eyes, and hear with our ears, than about such things as are the objects only of our reason and understanding.

3. And this suggests unto me another reason why men generally do not think of God as they ought, even because they do not care for Him; they have no real love and affection for Him; and therefore it is that they think so seldom of Him. Our thoughts cannot but run upon what we truly love, as David said, "Oh how I love thy Law! Psal. 119. it is my meditation all the day." His affections being really <sup>97.</sup> towards it, his meditations could not but be always upon it: and the exceeding love which he had to God, was the cause that God was the last out, and the first in, his thoughts each day; yea, he was continually thinking of Him, and that with "pleasure and delight." And thus did you and I Psal. 139. but really prefer God in our settled judgments, so as to <sup>17, 18.</sup>

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love Him above all things else, we should not be able to forbear thinking and contemplating upon Him, as the Person Whom our souls love. But the mischief is, men generally do not really love God with all their hearts and souls; they may love to speak of Him, but they do not truly love Him they speak of; and therefore it is that they care not to converse with Him, nor to meditate seriously upon Him. Did you but love God as you pretend, you could not but think of Him as you ought: but He is not in all your affections, and that is the reason that He is not in all your thoughts; that is, He is in none of them, as that phrase implies.

II. But let me tell you, in the second place, that not to think upon God is an evident sign of a very wicked and naughty heart; it is one of the most notorious properties whereby David here describes a wicked man. "The wicked," saith he, "through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God, God is not in all his thoughts." And, indeed, what greater argument can there be in the world of a base, impure, degenerate, and sinful mind, than to be always plodding and contriving about such low and pitiful trifles as most men throw away their thoughts upon, and in the meantime neglecting the Most High and Mighty God, as if He was not worthy to be thought of or minded by us? Ungrateful wretches that we are! that we should have nothing but what we receive from Him, and yet should be so far from making any acknowledgment to Him, that we should disdain so much as to think of Him! What is, if this be not, a clear demonstration of the highest impiety and wickedness imaginable? For this it was that the Eternal God denounced that severe threatening, that He would inflict a marvellous unheard-of punishment upon His people, because, though they honoured Him with their lips, their hearts were far from Him. It is a wonderful sin, and therefore deserves a wonderful punishment: yea, He calls Heaven and earth to witness against them for it. And oh, that the same complaint might not be justly taken up against many here present, who can think of your trades, think of your estates, think of your relations, think of your earthly business, think of your chapmen and debtors, but can find neither time nor hearts to think of Him, to Whom you are

Isa. 29. 13.

Isa. 1. 2, 3,  
4.

indebted for your lives, and all you have; that can employ your most serious thoughts upon some little earthly project for a whole hour, yea, a whole day together, without ever taking any notice of Him that continually preserves you, as if He was not worthy to be regarded by you. Oh, dreadful impiety! What tongue is able to express, what heart is able to conceive, the greatness, the horridness of this sin, than which nothing is more common among us, and yet nothing less minded or bewailed by us! But assure yourselves, whatsoever pretences you make to piety, whatsoever professions you make of religion, whatsoever graces or virtues you fancy yourselves to be adorned with, whatsoever duties and performances you seem to be constant and hearty in, so long as you delight not to “retain God in your knowledge,” nor to have Him continually in your thoughts, you are still “in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity;” and have just cause to reckon yourselves amongst the most heinous and notorious sinners upon earth. [Rom. 1. 28.] [Acts 8. 23.]

III. Especially considering, in the third place, that not thinking upon God is not only an infallible sign and mark of a wicked man, but it is the cause too that men are so wicked as they are, there being no wickedness whatsoever but is both contained in, and proceeds from, this one comprehensive and fertile sin. Did men seriously think of God as they ought to do, they would not dare to be so wicked, debauched, and hypocritical as they are generally; for the thoughts of God would damp all their pleasures, and so stop their career in sin, and give check to their most strong and prevalent corruptions. Was God but in all your thoughts, did you always apprehend Him that made, preserves, and governs the world, to be always present with you, observing your motions, weighing your actions, displeased with every sin you commit, and resolved to be revenged of you for it, and that He will one day judge you according to what you do; such thoughts as these would soon make you a-weary of playing with sin, and turn your love unto it into hatred and detestation against it: as I shall endeavour to make plain by instancing in several particulars.

1. What is the reason that there is so much atheism and



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unbelief in the world, but only that men do not think of God? Did they but think of what He is, and what He hath done; did they but consider the words of His mouth rehearsed in Scripture, and the works of His hands manifested in the creation of the universe; how He by His Almighty Word commanded all things out of nothing, and of His Own essential goodness still continues all things in their being; did they but consider the infinite wisdom that appears in the contrivance of the world, the infinite power that was exerted in the production of it, and the infinite goodness that shines forth in the management and administration of it; did they, I say, but seriously think of and consider these things, it would be so far impossible for them not to believe in God, that they could not but admire and worship Him. It is only "the fool that saith in his heart there is no God;" the fool, that is, he that doth not rightly weigh and consider things as he ought to do: it is only such a one that is capable of falling into so great a sin as atheism and unbelief is.

Psal. 14. 1.

Isa. 8. 13.

2. What is the reason that men generally have not the fear of God before their eyes? that they do not "sanctify the Lord of Hosts, so as to make Him their fear and their dread?" What is the reason of it? Certainly nothing but this, "that God is not in all their thoughts." For did you but often think how great and glorious, how just and powerful a God He is; how He governs and disposeth of all things in the world; that all the world to Him is not so much as a drop of the bucket to the whole ocean; that there is nothing good but He can give it to you, nothing evil but He can lay it upon you; that you lie continually at His mercy, and are every moment subject to the strokes of His Divine justice; did you, I say, but seriously lay these things to heart, would not you presently conclude it to be "a fearful thing indeed to fall into the hands of the living God?" This is the reason that God Himself gives why men do not fear Him.

Heb. 10. 31.

Jer. 5. 21.

3. What is the reason that men do not love God as they ought to do, but are apt to disregard and undervalue Him, but merely, because their thoughts are not fixed upon Him as they ought? For did you exercise yourselves conti-

nually in meditating upon His perfections, in considering and thinking upon His infinite wisdom, beauty, goodness, mercy, grace, glory, eternity, and the rest of these lovely and enamouring properties which are concentrated in His Divine Nature, your hearts would be even snatched from you, and your souls inflamed with the most ardent love and affection to Him : as we see David, whose thoughts being Ps. 63. 2, 5. always running upon God, his love was so intensely and strongly set upon Him, that he was restless without Him, longing and thirsting for nothing so much as to come into His presence and enjoy His favour. And did you but take the same course to keep your hearts close to God, dwelling continually upon the contemplation of His Divine perfections, your hearts by thus musing would soon wax hot within you, so as to burst out into flames of love to so excellent, so supereminent, so altogether lovely a Being as He is.

4. What is the reason also that men are so covetous and earthly-minded, and, by consequence, that fraud, lying, oppression, rapine, perjury, and the like unlawful artifices of getting money, are so rife among us? What is the reason, I say, of all these sins, but that men do not think of God, and the account which they must one day give to Him? For did you but think of God, you would love Him; and did you love Him, you could not possibly be so far in love with any thing else, as to displease Him to gain it. Did you fix your eyes continually upon Him, they would be so dazzled with His amazing glory and transcendent beauty, that all things else would seem but as darkness and deformity to you; the thoughts of God would soon thrust out and banish all thoughts of the world, and desire of riches from you: your great care would then be to please God; and as for other things, you would trust in His Word and Promise for Matt. 6. 33. the supplying them, you having it under His Own hand.

5. What is the reason that men are so puffed up with the prosperity of this world, and so apt to be cast down with every trouble and affliction which befalls them? Why, it is only for this reason, because they do not really think of God; for, was He continually in your minds, you could not but be vile and base in your own eyes, for all the gay and fine things which you may fancy yourselves to be possessed of.

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Alas ! what would all the pride and grandeur, the wealth and gaiety, of the world seem to you, who are always beholding, considering, and admiring, wisdom, majesty, glory and perfection itself ? And as you would not be lifted up with the prosperity, so neither would you be cast down with the adversities you meet with here below ; always contemplating upon height and happiness itself, you would think nothing upon earth either high or low, no estate either happy or miserable, and so would laugh at calamity, and despise all temporal afflictions ; so far from fainting under them, that you would rather embrace them with joy and thankfulness, as being the products of the Divine Wisdom, and the tokens of your Heavenly Father's love and kindness to you. It was this thinking of, and looking up to God and Heaven, that kept up the Apostles' spirits in the midst of persecution, and enabled them to undergo martyrdom itself with courage and rejoicing.

2 Cor. 4.  
16-18.

Lastly ; What is the reason that men generally slight prayer, or at least are very careless in the performance of it ? The reason is clear enough, they do not think of God ; for were their thoughts always taken up with Him, they could not but take all opportunities of making their addresses to Him. Were your hearts once used and accustomed to constant thinking upon God, you would never think yourselves well, but when you are praying to Him, or at least, some way or other conversing with Him. It would then be as tedious and irksome a thing not to be praying, as now it is to pray. And with how much reverence and devotion would you pray, if you always considered Whom you prayed to ! So that if you either neglect praying altogether, or matter not how you do it, you may conclude, "that God is not in all your thoughts."

Thus you see what great and heinous sins this one sin of not thinking upon God is the cause of, and opens a way to. The same may be said of all other sins ; for it is impossible for you to avoid any wickedness whatsoever as ye ought to do, so long as "God is not in all your thoughts ;" and therefore, if you matter not how wicked you are, you may still forget the great God that made you ; but if you desire not to be wicked, but holy, good, and pious men indeed, you

must begin here; you must gather up all your scattered thoughts, and fix them only upon God, so as to make Him the chief subject of your thoughts here, as you desire He should be the object of your happiness for ever.

But your presence here at this time commands me in charity to believe and hope that you desire, at least, not to be wicked men, and, by consequence, to think of God for the future, without which you cannot but be wicked; and therefore by this time I hope you are not only better prepared to understand the next question which I promised to speak to, but are likewise very desirous to have it explained unto you, and resolved, by the blessing and assistance of Almighty God, to order yourself and thoughts accordingly for the future. And I confess it is a question of more than ordinary moment, not easily understood, and much more difficult to be practised; and that is, How God is to be in all our thoughts, or how we ought to think of God? And be not too hasty in thinking this to be a thing which you know well enough already; it is my hearty desire that every soul here present both knew what to do, and did what they knew in this matter; but I fear there are but very few amongst us that do either; for I would not have you mistake yourselves so much as to think, that every time you talk or discourse of God to others, or think or say the word of God within yourselves, that then you necessarily think of God; for though this be all the thinking of God that people generally look after and take up with, yet really this is no thinking of God at all; for a man may talk of God, or read of God, yea, and pray to God too, all the day long, and yet not think of God at all as he ought to do; for thinking of God is quite another thing. There is a great art and mystery in it, which cannot be attained without taking a great deal of pains about it; for God is an infinite, incomprehensible Being, and our thoughts at the highest are but finite; but notwithstanding they are of that quick, nimble, active, and extensive nature, that they can extend themselves so far, that although they cannot comprehend God as being without bounds and limits, yet they may and ought to apprehend Him to be incomprehensible: but for that end, it is necessary that they be stretched to the highest pitch, and extended as far as



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possible without being broken and distracted, or else they can never do it, else they can never reach so high and super-excellent a Being as God is. But this is not so easy a matter for us to do, who, ordinarily conversing with nothing but sensible and corporeal objects, cannot without a great deal of study and labour, raise up our hearts so high as to think, not only of an immaterial and spiritual, but an infinite and eternal Being. Howsoever, seeing it is so absolutely necessary, in order to our being holy here, and happy hereafter, that we often, if not always, be thinking upon God, I shall endeavour to explain this Divine art unto you, and shew you how you may and ought to have God always in your thoughts; both which I shall acquaint you with in these following propositions.

1. First, In order to your thinking aright of God, you must be sure to use yourselves, by degrees, to think of things which are above you, and of an higher Nature than what you meet with upon earth. So long as you suffer yourselves to be always poring on such low and mean things as earthly riches, popular applause, carnal pleasures, and the like, it is impossible you should think of so high and glorious a Being as God is; for your thoughts being thus continually employed about such gross and heavy objects, themselves will degenerate into the nature of the objects they are employed about, and become gross and heavy too, always creeping along upon earth, never able to raise themselves higher than these lower regions of the world, nor to stretch themselves further than the pitiful narrow things upon earth reach; and therefore it is in vain to think of thinking upon God, until your thoughts and affections too be disentangled from the world, and your hearts hang loose and indifferent as to all things here below; that so your thoughts having no heavy clog upon them, may freely soar aloft in the open air, without taking any notice of any thing upon earth, still contemplating upon those far more glorious creatures which God hath made above, the sun, the moon, the stars; whereof the sun, by astronomical calculation, is computed to be three hundred and thirty-three times bigger than the earth; five millions and odd thousand miles distant from it; and yet how strangely doth it enlighten, heat, and influence every thing

upon it ! Saturn, the highest of the planets, is near forty-eight millions of miles beyond the sun ; and as for the fixed stars, they are so exceeding far off, that no astronomical observation ever was, or will be, able to reach their distance ; and yet if the clouds do not interpose, they are all visible and apparent to us ; so that we may conclude the earth, in comparison of the world, not to be much more, if so much, as a drop to the whole ocean. And if we did but accustom ourselves to think of those higher and more glorious parts of the creation, they would be as so many steps whereby our thoughts might at length climb up to the highest and most glorious Being of all, the Creator Himself. This was the means which David made use of to raise up his thoughts to God ; “ When I consider,” saith he, “ Thy Heavens, the Ps. 8. 1, 4. work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou shouldst visit him ? ” And this made him break forth into that lofty and Divine expression of God, “ Oh, Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth, Who hast set Thy glory above the Heavens.”

2. Secondly, having thus taken off your thoughts from the lower, and exercised them upon the more sublime parts of the creation, then, in order to your fixing them upon God, you must be sure to abstract them from all created beings whatsoever, so as not to suffer the idea or image of any creature whatsoever to remain in your minds ; for if you do, it is impossible for you to frame any true conception of God, for He is infinitely above and beyond all things in the world, and therefore the idea that represents any thing else, cannot possibly represent Him to our minds : or if we fancy to ourselves that the image of any thing else represents God to us, we are so far from thinking or conceiving of God aright, that we do indeed infinitely disparage His glory and perfections, fancying them to be but like a finite creature, as all things in the world are besides Himself. Hence God, being jealous of His glory, expressly forbids us in the Second Commandment to make any image or representation of Him whatsoever, “ Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image,” &c. and the reason He gives is, “ because,” saith He,

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“the Lord thy God is a jealous God :” He is jealous lest we should fancy Him like the image which we make of Him, or worship the image instead of Him. Hence also, in the most visible and glorious manifestation that He ever made of Himself to the sons of men, upon Mount Sinai, He then appeared to them under no image or similitude whatsoever, lest the people should afterwards conceive of Him or worship Him under such an image or similitude. This Moses takes special notice of, saying, “And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire ; ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude ; only ye heard a voice.” And again, “Take ye therefore good heed,” saith he, “unto yourselves ; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire.” And then he gives the reason why the Lord would not appear under any similitude ; even lest they should make or frame any image of Him to themselves. So that it seems they heard a voice indeed, but that is not a thing to be painted and engraven, it being not the object of the eye, but ear ; yet this was the only way that God then manifested Himself, representing Himself under no image, likeness, or similitude whatsoever ; and all, that we might think of Him as He is, and not as any image can represent Him to us. And, therefore, for all the little excuses which the Papists make for the worshipping of God by an image, I cannot imagine what they will answer for themselves when they come to His just tribunal, seeing they wilfully and pertinaciously act so directly contrary both to the words and scope of His commands : which they have therefore rased out of their catechisms and ordinary books of devotion, to blind the poor people, that they might not know that God ever commanded any such thing ; who, by consequence, are driven into that sad and dismal idolatry, as to worship God as an old man sitting in Heaven, or as three old men sitting and consulting together, as their images represent the Most Holy and incomprehensible Trinity. But if the people themselves that do so, be inexcusable, as certainly they are, because they might know better if they would use the means, what then shall we think of those that impose these things upon them ? What a dreadful account will they have to give another day !

Deut. 4. 12.

ver. 15.

ver. 16, 17,  
18.

Which that you and I may be sure to avoid, we must be so far from making any visible image or picture of God, that we must not so much as frame any similitude or resemblance of Him, no, not in our brains or fancies ; but whensoever we would think of God, we must abstract our thoughts from all things else, so as not to think Him like to any thing in the world we know, for so really He is not.

3. Thirdly, having thus refined your thoughts, and taken them off from all created beings, if you would think aright of God, you must still apprehend Him as One infinitely above all things else that you are able to apprehend. And the truest conceptions that you can have of Him, are these and the like :—

1. Think of God not as any particular, but the universal Being of the world ; as one that gives not only life and motion, but being and existence unto all things else, whether in “ Heaven above or on earth beneath.” This is that notion and conception of God which the apostle St. Paul would have instilled in the Athenians, telling them, “ That it is in Him we live, move and have our being.” Acts 17. 28. And that this is the most proper notion that we can have of God, is plain from those names whereby God hath unveiled Himself unto us in Scripture. As in the New Testament He is called *Κύριος* from the ancient Greek word *κύρω*, the same with *εἶμι* or *ὑπάρχω*, ‘to be.’ And therefore *Κύριος* properly signifies the same with *τὸ ὄν* ‘the Being’ as Plato rightly termed God ; and *ὁ ὢν ὁ ντῶν*, ‘the Being of beings,’ as Aristotle called Him. In the Old Testament, He is usually called *יהוה*, and *יה*, both which words signify ‘being’ or ‘essence’ in general. And when Moses asked God His Name, that he might know how to conceive of Him, God did not say I am this, or that, or the other Thing, but *אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה*, ‘I am that I am,’ and Exod. 3. 14. simply, *אֶהְיֶה*, ‘I am.’ Whereby He plainly signifies to us what thoughts and conceptions He would have us to entertain of Him ; that we should think of Him as of One that is in and of Himself the supreme and universal Being of the world ; that gives essence and existence unto all things else ; that He depends upon nothing, but all things else depend upon Him ; and that He is a most pure, simple, and uncompounded Being, having all things in Himself, and nothing in Himself but what is Himself ; not only a wise, a good, a



just, a powerful, a great, and glorious God, but wisdom, goodness, justice, power, greatness, and glory itself, the infinite and indivisible centre of all perfections whatsoever ; One that is all things that we can desire, yea, infinitely more than we can desire, imagine, or conceive ; and therefore when He would declare what He is unto us, He only saith, “ I am,” leaving us to make the application of Him to ourselves, according to our several wants, capacities, or desires. He sets as it were His hand to a blank that we may write under whatsoever good thing we would have of Him. And thus we are to think of God as One that is an universal Being, and not only the chiefest, but the Only universal good in the world, being in, and of Himself, whatsoever is good or lovely, whatsoever is pure or desirable, whatsoever is pleasing, yea, whatsoever is convenient or needful to make men happy.

2. Hence also you should apprehend and think of God, not only as One that is infinitely above all things, but as One likewise, Who alone made, supports, preserves, possesseth, governs, and disposeth all things in the whole world ; One, Who though He was infinitely happy in the enjoyment of His Own perfections, yet of His infinite goodness He was pleased to raise the stately fabric of the world we live in, commanding it out of nothing by His Own almighty word, only saying, “ Let it be so, and it was so.” Thus He made the Heavens with all things that are in them ; thus He made the earth with all things that are upon it ; and amongst the rest, thus He made you and me. And as He made, so He still preserves and governs the world by the word of His mouth, or according to His Own will and pleasure ; so that nothing doth or can happen in the world, but only just as He would have it. Neither must we think that He takes cognisance only of the more noble and sublime parts of the creation, such as the Cherubims and Seraphims, in the immaterial, the sun, moon, and stars, in the material Heavens ; as if He only governed them, and left the government of the inferior creatures wholly to themselves, as some have fondly conceited of Him : no, you must apprehend Him as ordering and managing not only all things in general, but every thing in particular, that is in the world, as our Saviour informs us, assuring us, that not so much as a sparrow can move, or fall

to the ground, without His order and concurrence. And though there be innumerable creatures in the world, far exceeding the arithmetic both of men and Angels, yet He takes special notice of every one of them, so that, "the very hairs of our head are all numbered" by Him, as our Saviour tells us; for indeed every thing is His, "The Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens is the Lord's, the earth also, and all that is therein." Every thing that you can fancy yourselves to have, it is all His; your houses, your lands, your goods, your money, your meat, your drink, your souls, your bodies, every thing is His, infinitely more His, than it is or can be yours; and therefore you cannot but think that He numbers, and weighs, and measures, and observes, and takes particular notice of every individual thing in the world, as well as of all things in general; as also that He is the first, the supreme, the universal Governor, Disposer, Director, and Orderer of all and every the actions, motions, and occurrences in the world.

3. Hence also you cannot but think of God as One that is continually looking upon you, being of that infinite and boundless majesty, greatness, and immensity, that He contains all things, but is contained of nothing; not included in Heaven, or excluded out of earth, but filling all places in Heaven and earth at all times, wholly with His essential, glorious, incomprehensible and divine presence, *In omnibus, extra omnia, ubique totus*, as St. Augustine words it, "In all things, beyond all things, every where wholly the same infinite, eternal, and unchangeable God." Thus David thought of God. Thus Job too thought of him, saying, "Lo, He goeth by me, and I see Him not; He passeth on also, but I perceive Him not;" as if He should have said, I cannot shine, but still God is with me; He always sees me, though I cannot see Him.

Thus are you and I to be always thinking upon God, as One that is always thinking upon us, and knows what we think better than ourselves do; as One Whose presence is always with us, and His eye continually upon us, so that we can never be out of His sight. Thus we are to think of Him at this moment, as One Whose glory shines round about us, and Who hath heard all along, and still hears what I say of Him, and observeth likewise, what your thoughts

Matt. 10.  
29.

ver. 30.

Deut. 10.  
14.

[Serm. 227.  
de S. Vincent: tom.  
v. pt. ii. p.  
1119. F. cf.  
p. 1122. G.]

Ps. 139. 7. 8.

Job 9. 11.

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have been and still are employed about, whether you have been thinking of Him or no, or hearkening and observing how you ought to think of Him; and thus wheresoever you are, whatsoever you do, your thoughts are still to be upon God, apprehending the All-Glorious and Supreme Being, the basis and foundation of all things, the Maker and Governor of the world, to be always looking about you, upon you, into you, through you, weighing and considering every act you do, every word you speak, every thought you think, every passion or affection that moves or stirs within you, intending to judge you accordingly another day, when

Ecc1. 12. 14. He "shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Thus it is that you are always to be thinking of God, your hearts being continually possessed with a due sense of His greatness and glory, and your minds with awful and reverential apprehensions of His Almighty power and supreme authority in and over the whole world; so as to have your whole soul employed and taken up, either with set and solemn contemplations of Him, or at least with inward and private ejaculations to Him; always looking upon Him as looking upon you, and admiring, extolling, and adoring that infinite confluence of all perfections that are concentrated in Him. And verily, would you be persuaded to have God thus always in your minds and thoughts, what holy and what happy creatures would you soon be!

First, what holy creatures would you be, if your thoughts were always thus running upon God! How fearful would you be of offending Him! How careful to please Him! How devout would you then be in praying to Him! How attentive in hearing from Him! How serious would you then be in all religious services! How just, how charitable, how circumspect in all your actions! Religion would then seem another thing to you than what heretofore you have fancied; you would then be so far from putting God off with a few external performances, that you would think your whole souls too little, your whole lives too short, to worship so great, so glorious, so transcendent a Being as He is; you would not then need any arguments to persuade you to honour and obey, to love and fear Him; for such thoughts

of God as these are, would make such vehement impressions upon you, and have that force and power over you, that you would be always restless and unquiet, never thinking yourselves well, but when you are doing something wherein ye may serve Him, and manifest your love, obedience, and thankfulness unto Him.

2. And what happy, as well as holy creatures would you then be! For so far as you think and contemplate aright upon God, you do indeed partake of that happiness for which alone your persons were at first designed, and your natures fitted. You would in a manner live in Heaven, whilst you are upon earth; your souls would be above, although your bodies be below; and, by consequence, nothing upon earth would disturb your happiness, or make you miserable: for whatsoever happens here below, is still below you, whose thoughts are soaring aloft as high as Heaven, there contemplating of, and enjoying Him that governs the world, and orders all things in it; by which means, in the midst of all the storms and tempests which may be raised without, you will still have calmness and tranquillity, peace and happiness within; because by your continually thinking upon God, as managing and disposing of all things in the world by His Almighty power and infinite wisdom, and especially if you think upon Him as your Redeemer too, as well as Maker, and as one reconciled unto you by the death of Christ, then I say, you cannot but repose that trust and confidence in Him, which will enable you to cry out with David in the midst of all outward calamities which you either feel or fear, “My heart is fixed, Ps. 57. 7. O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise.”

Thus now you have seen how God ought to be in all your thoughts, and what extraordinary advantages will accrue to you by it. I hope I need not use any more arguments to persuade you to call in your thoughts from other things, and to fix them upon Him that made them, and so bring them thither where they were at first designed to dwell. And if there be any here present, who shall still suffer their thoughts to spend themselves upon the impertinent toys and trifles of this lower world, and not raise them up to God, I shall take the boldness to tell such amongst you, that you



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are wicked men ; this being the great character and mark which the Holy Ghost here gives of a wicked man. And, therefore, whatsoever outward profession you make of religion, you have nothing of pure and true religion within you ; for as God is the only object of all religion, so is serious thinking of Him the very first act of religion which we can perform unto Him, and without which all religious services whatsoever have nothing of true piety and devotion in them. And, therefore, being desirous to be instrumental in directing you all how to become real Saints, truly pious, and heirs of Salvation, I have endeavoured to explain this great duty unto you, which is indeed the ground and foundation of all other duties whatsoever, which you can or ought to perform to Almighty God. Let me, therefore, beseech you once again to be serious in labouring after it, and to take pains with your backward hearts to bring them to it ; have God always before your eyes : let Him remain continually in your thoughts ; and oft-times retiring yourselves quite from the world, raise up your thoughts higher and higher, and when you have got them as high as possibly you can, then conceive of God, as One that is infinitely higher than them all ; and never give over till you find yourselves at a loss, amazed at the infinite perfections of so great, so glorious, so immutable, so supereminent, so incomprehensible a Being, and so melt away into an holy longing and desiring to come to that blessed place, where in and through Christ you shall do nothing else but behold that All-Glorious Being face to face, and without any disturbance or interruption from the creatures, enjoy His presence, partake of His favour, adore His perfections, sing forth His praises, extol His mercy, His wisdom, power, and glory, and have Him continually and perfectly in your thoughts and affections unto all eternity.

## SERMON CXLIII.

THE HAPPINESS OF HAVING OUR SINS FORGIVEN.

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PSALM xxxii. 1.

*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

WE who are here assembled this morning to perform our worship and homage to Him that made us, although we were all made of the same mould, and had the image of God enstamped upon us all alike; yet it is strange to observe how much difference there is amongst us: difference in our callings, and difference in our conditions in the world; difference in the temperature of our bodies, and difference in the dispositions of our minds; difference in our judgments and opinions, and difference in our passions and affections; some loving what others hate, others hating what some love; some fearing what others hope for, and some hoping for what others fear; some desiring others' detestations, others detesting their desires: but, notwithstanding, there is one thing that we all agree in; that is, we all desire to be happy: yet even in this too we do not so much agree in the desire of happiness, but we differ as much in the prosecution of it. To be happy in general we all desire; but, according to the diversity of our tempers and dispositions, we have divers notions and conceptions of happiness itself, and also of the object of it; and it is a rare thing to find one that hits upon the right; for, we living only by sense, and conversing ordinarily with nothing but dirt and clay, we are generally grown so low-spirited and earthly-minded, as not to fancy

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or aim at any higher happiness, than what we can pick out of our fellow-creatures upon earth, contenting ourselves with the lowest and meanest things imaginable, for the object of that which we account our happiness. Thus we may observe some so brutish, as to place the happiness of their souls only in pleasing and gratifying of their senses, and so, though capable of the joys of Angels, look no higher than to be fellow-commoners with the brutes that perish. Others please themselves with pleasing others, and fancy themselves no farther happy, than they think that others fancy them to be so, and so place their own happiness in other men's fickle fancies and variable opinions of them. Another sort of men there is amongst us, that may rather be termed worms than men, in that they feed upon nothing but dust and clay, even disdain not to stoop so low as to lick up the serpent's food, making the fancied riches of this transient world the only object of their souls' desires, and so compute their happiness from the greatness of their crop, or fulness of their trade; from the largeness of their estates, or success of their adventures: but we cannot but all know how frequently we are mistaken in our opinions of things; and none of us but must needs have found by experience before now, that there is no real happiness to be enjoyed in any of these things; all things here below being so far from satisfying our immortal souls, and by consequence from making of us truly happy, that we are ordinarily miserable in the enjoyment of them, and always capable of enjoying more than they are able to afford us.

Now, seeing that we all desire to be happy, and yet often find ourselves so fearfully mistaken about that happiness which we do desire, it must needs behove us all to consult some other person besides ourselves about it, that we may rightly understand what true happiness is, and which is the ready way that leads unto it; otherwise we may trudge about the world all our lives long, and encompass both sea and land to search for happiness, and shall never find it: but questionless there is none can better certify us what our happiness is, than He Who first made us capable of being happy; and in the enjoyment of Whom alone we can be so. I suppose there is none here present but understand Whom I

mean, even the all-wise and eternal God, Whom I hope you all believe to be a competent judge in this case, and are willing to submit your judgments unto His; but, if you consult Him in this business, He will tell you quite another story than you ever heard, or perhaps so much as thought of; for He hath given you His opinion under His hand concerning your happiness, in the Holy Scriptures, left upon record on purpose to shew wherein our happiness doth consist, and which is the way that leads unto it. But in all the Scriptures you never find Him calling them happy which you fancy or esteem to be so; for where doth He ever say, Blessed are the rich, for they have great estates; blessed are the honourable, that have much applause; or blessed are the voluptuous, for they enjoy the pleasures of this world? No, no, when He speaks of happiness, He speaks after another rate: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the meek; blessed are the undefiled in the way, that walk in the Law of the Lord;" and, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered." And indeed this is that blessedness which makes way for all the other, and without which we shall never know what it is to be blessed or happy; so that if you will take the Word of Almighty God Himself, and trust His judgment concerning your happiness, here you have it in as plain terms as you could desire, or as Himself could have delivered His opinion in; for though David was the person that spake these words, it was from the Spirit of God that he spake them, by Whose order also and command, he spake so emphatically, and with admiration, אשרי נשוי פשע, 'Oh the happiness! oh the blessedness of such a man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.' The very reading of which words, methinks, should make us impatient and restless, till we understand the true meaning of them, and know who it is whom God Himself esteems an happy and blessed man, even he "whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered."

From whence we may observe in general, that all men naturally are sinful and miserable; yea, therefore miserable because sinful, and that our misery cannot be removed till "our sins are covered;" nor our persons blessed, until our



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“transgressions are forgiven.” But all such persons as have “their transgressions forgiven, and their sins covered,” are blessed; yea, therefore blessed because their “transgressions are forgiven, and their sins are covered.” “Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

Now, for the opening of the full meaning and purport of these words, that so I may give you some light into the nature of true felicity, and the way that leads unto it, we will consider,

1st. What is “transgression” or “sin.”

2dly. What it is to have “transgressions forgiven, and sin covered.”

3dly. How are they blessed, “whose transgression is thus forgiven, and their sin covered.”

4thly. How may we attain to this blessing.

I. As for the first, what transgression or sin is, there are three words here, which the Holy Ghost makes use of to express it by, *פשע*, *חטאה*, and *עון*, which words are all used together. Also Exodus xxxiv. 7. the first word *פשע* signifies properly a falling from, and rebelling against God. So the root is used, Isa. i. 2, *והם פשעו בי*, ‘and they have rebelled against Me.’ So that every sin is an act of treason and rebellion against the Crown of Glory, the King of kings, Who therefore looks upon every sinner as a rebel, as one that sides with Satan against God. The next word *חטאה* properly denotes missing the scope or mark we aim at, as the word is used (Judg. xx. 16). For all our actions should be directed to the Law of God, which when we miss, either by going beyond it, or falling short of it, then we are said to sin, as the Greek word *ἀμαρτία* also signifies. The last word here used is *פוע*, which denotes properly perverseness or crookedness, and so metaphorically the obliquity of any action whereby it doth not agree with that straight rule of God’s word, which it should be directed, and will be examined by. According to these several expressions whereby the Holy Ghost sets forth the nature of sin, St. John rightly

1 John 3. 4. defines sin to be ‘a transgression of the law;’ *ἡ ἀμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία*, that is, sin in its general nature is illegality, or the contrariety of any act or habit to the law of God. Thus Saul saith, “I have sinned, for I have transgressed the com-

mandment of the Lord.” Now from this definition of sin laid down by the Apostle, we may observe four things especially to be considered in every sin.

First, The command of God being pure and holy, sin, by reason of its contrariety to that command, cannot but leave a *macula*, a spot or blot upon the soul that doth commit it, making it so far impure or different from the law of God. Hence our Saviour saith, “that those things which come from the heart defile a man.” Matt. 15. 18. And the Psalmist, speaking of all mankind as being sinners, saith, “They are altogether become filthy,” “for their mind and conscience is defiled.” Ps. 14. 3. Tit. 1. 15. Thus also sin itself is called a “spot or wrinkle,” because as spots and wrinkles deface the body, so doth sin the soul. Eph. 5. 27. And this is that which makes both sin and sinners odious and abominable unto God, He “being of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” which is nothing else but impurity itself: [Hab. 1. 13.] by reason whereof, the soul that was made most absolutely pure and perfect, is morally corrupted and depraved in its faculties; its beauty is defaced, its lustre clouded, and its strength abated; so that it may justly be pronounced filthy and deformed, both by God and men. But this effect of sin upon the soul is not properly taken away by remission, but by sanctification, whereby the blood of Christ “cleanseth us from all sin,” and we are “washed from our sins in His blood:” both which expressions suppose something of impurity or filth. 1 John 1. 7. Rev. 1. 5.

Secondly. Every sin hath its offensiveness unto God, whereby He is provoked, angry and displeased at it; for the Law of God is, according to His Nature, holy; and therefore sin, being contrary to His Law, must needs be contrary to His Nature too. And we know by ourselves, that what is contrary to our natures is offensive and displeasing to us; and therefore no wonder that sin is so to God, He being the Best of all Goods, and sin the worst of all evils; for so there is a direct contrariety, a diametrical opposition betwixt His holiness and sin’s impurity. Hence His people in the wilderness are said to have “provoked Him to anger with their invention,” “and to have angered Him at the waters of strife,” yea, “forty years long,” saith He, “was I grieved with this generation;” and so David’s sins of murder and adultery are Ps. 106. 29. ver. 32. Ps. 95. 10.

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2 Sam. 11.  
27.

said to have "displeased the Lord," or, as the original imports, they were 'evil in His eyes;' that is, he could not look upon them without loathing and abhorrence. Which consideration should make us dread the very thoughts of sin, whereby we increase the wrath and incur the displeasure of Almighty God Himself against us.

Thirdly. Hence every sin, by reason of its contrariety to God's Law and offensiveness to His Majesty, really, and by the strictest rules of Justice, deserveth death, which the Rom. 6. 23. Apostle expresses, saying, "the wages of sin is death." Where, by death, we are to understand the separation of the soul, not only from the body, but from God too, which is indeed the proper death of the soul; forasmuch as the life and happiness of the soul consists in its union unto God, and communion with Him. But sin, by reason of its contrariety to God's Nature, and loathsomeness in His sight, makes a separation betwixt "God and the soul," from which flows all manner of misery, which it is impossible for a creature to undergo. All which was threatened also under the name of Isa. 59. 2. death, to keep man from sin: "in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death;" which death or misery, as it is the wages and desert of sin, must needs be greater than a creature of itself can ever suffer: for sin hath an infinite evil, pravity, or deformity in it, in that it is directly contrary and offensive to the infinite Goodness, Purity, and Glory of God; for all acknowledge that the greatness of the offence is to be computed from the dignity of the person against whom it is committed, so that by how much greater the person is that receives the injury, by so much greater is the Gen. 2. 17. injury that he doth receive. As Shimei's cursing of David was a much greater offence than if he had said the same words against his equal. But then what shall we think of the offences committed against the Supreme Being of the world, the Infinite and Eternal God? Certainly they must needs deserve infinite and eternal punishment, so that no creature can ever be able to undergo as much as his sins deserve, and therefore every impenitent sinner must ever undergo as much as he is able; and this is the reason that hell torments are eternal.

[2 Sam. 16.  
5.]

Fourthly. Hence in the last place, so soon as ever any

person hath committed any sin, he is immediately obliged to suffer eternal death, as the desert and wages of his sin; and although God at present doth not inflict it upon him, as in justice He may, yet the man is every moment obnoxious to it, and is still bound over to answer for his sin before the tribunal of God, and this is that which we call the guilt of sin. Thus all the world is said to be guilty before God, Rom. 3. 19.

ὑποδίκως τῷ Θεῷ, ‘subject to the judgment of God,’ as the expression properly implies. Now this guilt of sin, or obligation to punishment, remains after the act itself is passed, and perhaps forgotten too; for the act itself may be but transient, and so as soon forgotten as committed: but though thou forgettest thy sins, thou must not think that God does so; or that because the act is passed, therefore thy guilt is past too: no, though thy sins were committed many years ago, yet they may still lie at thy door, crying for vengeance as much as in thy very commission of them: thou art still obliged to bear the punishment of them, as well as when they were but newly committed; for though the act of sin be transient and soon passeth away, yet the guilt still continues; thou art still obnoxious to the wrath of God, and ever will be so, until thy sin be pardoned. Which brings me to the second thing I promised to shew, even what it is to “have our transgressions forgiven, and our sin covered.”

II. But if you have but rightly weighed and considered what hath been already delivered concerning the nature and effects of sin, you will easily apprehend the true notion of pardon, or what it is to “have our transgressions forgiven;” for every sin, as you have heard, being a transgression of God’s Law, and an offence to His Majesty, therefore doth it oblige him that commits it to undergo the consequences of God’s wrath, even eternal death, which God in His Law hath threatened against sin. So that every man by reason of his sins is obnoxious to death, and in continual danger of hell torments; and therefore, so long as he continues so, he is upon that account reputed or esteemed by God as a sinner, as one who is worthy of, and obliged to suffer death. Now remission or forgiveness of sin, is nothing else but the cancelling this our obligation to death or eternal punishments, or disannulling those bonds whereby we were before



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bound to receive "the wages of sin," by which means we are so freed from our sins, as if we had never been guilty of them; neither doth God look upon us any longer as sinners, nor deals with us according to our former demerits, but reckons us amongst just and righteous persons, noways obliged now to suffer those penalties which Himself hath denounced against sinners.

But this being a matter of so great importance and unspeakable comfort to us all, because we have all sinned, I shall endeavour more particularly to prove and explain it to you. When David had committed those two great sins of murder and adultery, God, by His Prophet Nathan, reproves him for them; upon which David cries out, "I have sinned against the Lord," and Nathan said, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Whence we may see that God's forgiving or putting away our sins, is only His freeing us from death which we have deserved by them; as is plain also from our Saviour's saying of him that blasphemes against the Holy Ghost, "That he never hath forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." Where we may observe how forgiveness is opposed to our being in danger of eternal damnation, so that he that is forgiven is not in danger of eternal damnation, and he that is in danger of eternal damnation is not forgiven; and therefore forgiveness is the putting of us out of the danger of hell and all our deserved torments, which also is imported in the several words and phrases whereby the Holy Ghost expresses this blessing to us. As, in my text, it is expressed by taking away our sins, *נשוי פשע*, 'whose sin is taken away,' implying that there is nothing remaining of it; it is all gone, or at least it is covered, so as God takes no notice of it, minds it no more than if He had never seen it. Thus in the next verse, forgiveness is expressed by not having sin imputed to us; that is, God doth not lay it to our charge, nor reckon it to us, or put it upon our score. Thus sometimes it is called "blotting out our sins." Our sins are frequently called *ὀφειλήματα*, 'debts,' because by our sins we are debtors unto God's justice, owing nothing less than eternal punishments for them, which our Blessed Lord hath taught us each day to pray that they might be remitted; when, therefore, God

2 Sam. 12.  
13.

Mark 3. 29.

Isa. 43. 25.

blots these debts out of his book, and doth not require them of us, nor charge them upon us, but takes off all the obligations whereby we were bound to pay them, and makes them void and of none effect, then He is said to forgive us our sins.

Many expressions we have to the same purpose. Thus, Ps. 103. 10, therefore, when God pardons our sins, he acquits us from all 11, 12; Mic. 7. 18, 19; our obligations to punishment, looks upon us as if we had Hos. 14. 2. not sinned, and therefore is no longer offended at us for them; so that He remits both the punishment and offence, willing neither to condemn nor be displeased with us for them any more. It is true He may afflict us in mercy but not in judgment; He may deal with us as a father to chastise us, not as a judge to condemn us according to our desert. For the further explication of this pardon, consider,

First, It is God alone can pardon sins; for it is against Him only that they are committed, and therefore it must be Ps. 51. 4. by Him only that they can be pardoned; and seeing our debts are owing only to Him, who but He can be able to remit them? I suppose there is none here present but know better things concerning the debts which are owing to themselves, than to think that any but themselves can pardon them. But what shall we think then of those that go to Rome for the cancelling their obligations unto Heaven? Or solicit the Pope or any of his creatures to absolve them for those offences which they have committed against their great Creator? All that we can say is this, that it is certainly the most absurd as well as impious practice that was ever introduced amongst the sons of men; and that whosoever takes this course to be acquitted from their debts, they do but incur more, and that they do not only pay for such kind of pardons in this, but they must do it again in another world.

Secondly, We can never expect that God should deny Himself to pardon us, or that it can stand with the glory of His power and justice, to put up the affronts and injuries which His Own creatures have committed against Him, without having satisfaction made unto Him for them: especially considering that His word is passed; He hath said it, "In [Gen. 2. the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" that 17.] is, that every sin shall be punished with death: and seeing He hath said it, He cannot but perform it; neither must

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we think that He will be unfaithful to His word, that so He may be favourable unto us, or violate His justice to exalt His mercy.

[Luke 17.  
10.]

Thirdly, Nothing that we can do can ever recompense God for the least offence that we commit against Him, nor satisfy His justice either in whole or in part for our own or others' sins. For there is nothing less than eternal death due to every sin, and, by consequence, how many thousand eternal deaths have we all deserved for those thousands of sins we have committed? And when any man hath done as much as is required of him, or hath suffered as much as he hath deserved, then let him begin to boast his works of supererogation, and plead for the distributions of pardons and indulgences out of the treasures of the Church, collected from the merits of the Saints. In the meanwhile let us all look upon ourselves as unprofitable servants, wretched and undone caitiffs, who have offended the Lord of Hosts and incurred His displeasure, and altogether unable to satisfy Him or help ourselves.

Isa. 53. 5,  
6, 7; Rom.  
5. 8, 9;  
Eph. 1. 7;  
Col. i. 14.  
1 Tim. 2. 6.

Fourthly, It is only upon the account of Christ, that God is pleased to dispense His pardons; for it is He alone that as man suffered, and as God satisfied for our sins. And therefore our forgiveness is attributed only to His death; and the reason is, because He dying in our steads "gave Himself a ransom for us all." By which means He hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being Himself made a curse for us, and taken off our obligations unto death, by undergoing it in our rooms. In short, take it thus: We by our sins are indebted unto God, and owe Him nothing less than eternal death; which we being unable to pay without being undone for ever, the Son of God Himself was pleased to become our surety, not only to be bound for us, but to pay our debt; which He did, by suffering that death for us in our natures, which we were designed to suffer in our own persons: upon whose account therefore we are all brought into a capacity of the blessed here spoken of, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

III. Having thus considered what it is "to have our transgressions forgiven, and our sins covered," I need not surely spend much time in shewing, that that man is blessed

whose sins are thus remitted ; for I hope there is none here present, but know themselves to be sinners, even that you have broken those just and righteous laws which the Eternal God hath commanded you to observe and keep ; and I suppose also, that you cannot be ignorant of the sad and dismal consequents of your sins, and what dreadful judgments you are obnoxious to by reason of them ; and therefore cannot but be sensible of their happiness, whose sins are pardoned, and their transgressions covered.

Howsoever, to prepare you the better for the clear understanding of this transcendent happiness, give me leave to mind you a little both of your sins and dangers.

First, As for your sins, I hope you need not be much minded of them ; for I cannot but wonder, methinks, how you are able to keep them out of your minds, or to think of any thing else, considering that every thing you do is some way or other sinful ; yea, not only your actions, but your very words and thoughts are defiled with sin : for certainly mankind is as bad now as it was before the flood, when “ God saw the wickedness of man, that it was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” But besides the general corruption of your natures, and the continual pravity of your lives, I dare say there is none here present but is conscious to himself of many particular and remarkable sins that he hath been guilty of, and defiled with ; I do not say, that you have all indulged yourselves in the more atrocious sins and scandalous enormities ; but do you not remember the time when you spake unadvisedly with your lips, or thought maliciously against your neighbour ? do not you remember the time when your tongues have uttered falsehood, and your hearts have meditated deceit and fraud ? when you studied to overreach your brother, and endeavoured to go beyond and cheat him in such or such a matter ? do not you remember the times that you have spent in your pride or revellings, in admiring yourselves, and censuring others ? do not you remember the time when you blasphemed God’s Name, or abused His mercies, profaned His Sabbaths and despised His service, slighted His favour, and neglected your devotions to Him for a whole day together ? or can you

Gen. 6. 5.



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possibly forget how your hearts have burned with lust or passion, and your souls have been inflamed with malice and revenge? how jolly and merry you have been amongst men, how dull and heavy when you appear before God? how eager and earnest you have been in the pursuit of earth, how cold and indifferent in your looking after Heaven? or have you forgotten since the last time ye were overtaken with surfeiting or drunkenness, and the cares of this life, preferring the creature before the great Creator, Who is God blessed for evermore? I dare say there is none of you but know yourselves to have been guilty of some, if not many, of these sins which I have now recited, and of others like unto them; and that, to the original corruption which you brought into the world, you have added thousands of actual transgressions since you have been here.

2. Now let me desire you to bethink yourselves a little, what a sad condition these your sins have brought you into; for let me tell you, how slight soever you make of them, because at present you may live in ease and plenty, all your sins are committed, not against men, but God, and therefore whether you see it, or believe it or no, He that made you is really angry with you; for “God is angry with the wicked every day.” And therefore be it known unto thee, whosoever thou art that art still in thy sins, He that governs the world, the Eternal God, at this very moment frowns upon thee, insomuch that if thou couldst but see how angry and displeased He is with thee, thou wouldst not be able to endure thyself, but wouldst immediately sink down into nothing, or rather into the very torments of hell. And although God doth not as yet discover this the fierceness of His wrath against thee, because then thou couldst not live, yet be sure all the curses written in the Law of God against sin are ready at God’s command to fall upon thee: nay, they are upon thee already; God Himself hath pronounced thee Cursed, saying, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.” And if God hath cursed thee, who can bless thee? especially seeing He hath cursed thy very blessings, as He Himself saith. So that so long as thou continuest in this condition, thou hast no such thing as a blessing in all thy house; for

Psal. 7. 11.

Gal. 3. 10.

Mal. 2. 2.

thy very house, and all that is in it, is cursed to thee; yea, be where thou wilt, do what thou canst, thou art still accursed, and in continual danger of hell itself; for thou standest continually upon the very brink of the bottomless pit, and mayest justly expect each moment to be tumbled in; for thy sins have offended God, and therefore His justice hath bound thee over to answer it before His tribunal, where there are many at this moment trembling before Him, expecting their last and dreadful doom; and thou knowest not but “this night thy soul may be required of thee,” and summoned to appear and answer for thy faults at the same place: howsoever, thou canst never promise thyself one moment’s respite out of hell, being continually obnoxious to the stroke of Divine justice for those very sins which thou hast hitherto made thy pleasure and delight.

Luk. 12. 20.

This, therefore, is the sad and wretched condition of all sinners, and that which sin brings every soul into that is guilty of it. But tell me then, what do ye now think of those persons whose sins are pardoned? Do not ye think them the happiest persons in the world? surely you cannot choose. But whether you think them to be so, or no, I am sure they are, and you will think so too, if you do but consider,

*First*, That all those whose sins are pardoned are out of all danger, and perfectly secure from evil; for in that their sins which brought them into all this danger and mischief, are taken away, their danger must needs cease, and all mischief be removed from them; for they can be no longer obliged to pay the debt when the bond is cancelled, nor to bear the punishment when they are acquitted from it; so that they may walk securely and fear no ill; for God’s anger is appeased towards them, and the curses of the Law are taken off from them; for they are no longer guilty, and therefore cannot in justice be condemned; “Though their sins were as Isa. 1. 18. scarlet, they are now as white as snow; though they were like crimson, they are now as wool.” That is, though they were sinners, they are now no longer so; their sins are now forgotten, as if they had never been committed, and their souls are now as safe as if they had never been in danger; and therefore lift up your heads for joy, all ye whose sins are

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pardoned! God was angry at you, but now He is well pleased with you; you were once in danger both of temporal and eternal punishments, but now you are secured from both: all the curses of the Law did once belong unto you, but now the blessings of the Gospel do all attend you.

Consider this, all ye that dream of happiness in this world, and then tell me, whether any happiness can be compared to his “whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered?”

[ii.] Especially considering, in the next place, that when God pardons any man’s sins, He pardons all his sins. All His acts of grace and pardon are without exceptions; so that all our former sins shall be as if they never had been. Nay, more than that too, whensoever God pardons our sins, He likewise accepts our persons; so far from looking upon us as sinners, that He accounts us righteous. For though these two, remission of sins, and acceptance of our persons, be distinct branches of our justification before God, yet they are never separated; for God never remits any man’s sins without accepting his person, nor accepts his person without remitting his sins too; for these always go together, and though not in the notion, yet in the application of them, they are inseparable. So that whensoever God imputeth righteousness, be sure He imputes no sin; and where he imputes no sin, he always imputeth righteousness. This notion I ground upon that passage of St. Paul, where he quotes these very words of the Psalmist, to prove that God imputeth righteousness without works; “even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” But the Psalmist doth not speak one word of imputed righteousness, but only of not imputing sin; yet from the non-imputation of sin, St. Paul proves the imputation of righteousness without works; which argument would be senseless and not conclusive at all, unless the not imputing of sin did necessarily suppose and imply the imputation of righteousness, as most certainly it doth; all remission of sin necessarily depending upon the sufferings and righte-

Jer. 50. 20.

Rom. 4. 6,  
7, 8.

ousness of Christ imputed to us, and therefore the Apostle's argument is both right and forcible; for, seeing the Psalmist here saith, "that man is blessed to whom the Lord imputes no sin," it necessarily follows, that our blessedness depends upon the imputation of righteousness to us, without which God could not but impute sin. And seeing David saith that God imputes no sin, St. Paul rightly concludes that He imputes righteousness, because that the connexion betwixt these two is so inseparable, that one cannot possibly be without the other: and therefore it is that they are often put for one another; especially remission in Scripture is often put for our whole justification, because whosoever is pardoned is also justified before God. If our names be blotted out of the roll of sinners, be sure they are put into the catalogue of saints: if our sins be pardoned, God's wrath is appeased; and if His wrath be appeased towards us, He cannot but be well pleased with us, and smile upon us.

And if so, how blessed, how happy must that man needs be, "whose transgression is forgiven, and his sin covered!" Certainly you do not know what the word happiness means, if you think not this the highest happiness that a creature is capable of; for when thy sins are pardoned, is the eternal God Himself reconciled unto thee? Is He become thy friend and thy God? Doth He rejoice over thee, and rest in His love towards thee? Doth He smile upon thee, and so manifest His respect and favour to thee? Oh happy, thrice happy soul! infinitely more happy than I am able to express, or thyself, as yet, art able to conceive; yea, and it is the only happiness too, that He that made us hath appointed for us! For He hath made nothing to make men happy, intending Himself alone and His love and favour should be the only object of their felicity: and yet this great, this exceeding great and only happiness, all they have both a right to, and possession of, whose sins are pardoned; which if you do but seriously consider, none of you but must needs cry out with the Psalmist in my text, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and his sin covered."

[iii.] Thirdly, and lastly; That nothing may be wanting to make them completely happy, consider, that whose sins soever are remitted, their lusts are subdued too, and all that



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are accounted righteous are made to be so; for the Son and Spirit always go together; the One to justify our persons, and the Other to sanctify our natures: so that the merit of Christ is never imputed to us, but the graces of the Spirit are likewise implanted in us; and therefore every one "whose transgression is forgiven and his sins covered," his heart is also purified, and his soul made holy. Hence it is that it is here said, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth no sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile;" implying, that all such persons that have their sins pardoned, have no guile, no deceit, no hypocrisy in their hearts, but are really and truly holy. As God is reconciled to them, so are they reconciled to Him; as the Son hath vouchsafed His pardons to them, the Spirit distributes His graces amongst them, whereby their minds are enlightened, their judgments informed, their wills rectified, and all their affections so turned into their proper channels, that they are enabled to serve God faithfully in this, and by consequence, to enjoy Him eternally in the world to come. And all they whose sins are pardoned, and their persons justified, their souls shall be most certainly saved, God Himself having told us expressly,

Rom. 8. 30. "that whom He justifieth, them He also glorifieth."

Consider this, and then tell me, who is, or can be, if that man be not happy "whose sins are pardoned." Must not that man needs be happy, who hath the image of God re-instamped upon him, and is made holy as God is holy? Must not that man needs be happy, who is in favour with the Lord of Hosts, and hath his soul adorned with all true grace and virtue? Must not that man needs be happy, who walks in the ready way that leads to Heaven, and shall ere long be crowned with eternal glory? Thus happy, thus blessed, is every one amongst you "whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered, to whom the Lord imputeth no sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile." And, therefore, if there be any amongst you, as I hope there are, whose sins are pardoned, give me leave in few terms to congratulate the happiness that is conferred upon you, not such happiness as deluded mortals upon earth do so much covet and admire, which hath no other existence but only in disturbed fancies; but that real, that true, that eternal happi-

ness, which God Himself accounts to be so, and therefore hath proclaimed you to be happy. And therefore, whatsoever your condition be in this world, you are blessed in it, and it is blessed to you; for that man surely cannot but be blessed, whom truth itself hath pronounced to be so. And therefore trouble not your heads, nor concern yourselves about the occurrences of this transient life; whatsoever happens, you cannot but be blessed, in that your sins are pardoned, and so your souls are out of the reach of danger; He that governs the world is become your friend, your fortress, and your exceeding great reward, and therefore envy not the prosperity of the foolish, nor fret at their pomp and grandeur: they may think themselves to be happy, but God Himself had said that you are so; and therefore suffer not yourselves to be overwhelmed with grief, or tormented with needless fears, but still lift up your head for joy, as knowing that your redemption draweth nigh. And in the meanwhile, do but you continue your fidelity and allegiance to the King of Heaven, and be as dutiful unto Him as He is gracious unto you, and you will all have cause to say from your own experience, that "blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

IV. But I fear that I have been injurious to your patience, in that I have treated so long of the happiness of those whose sins are pardoned, and have not as yet shewn how all that are here present may be partakers of this happiness, which methinks none of you but should be very impatient till you hear; for you are all as yet capable of it, and invited to it, and none of you can miss of it, that will but observe these infallible rules which God hath prescribed in order to it; which that you may rightly understand, I shall unfold them to you in as few and plain terms as possibly I can, and as a matter of such importance requires. But let me tell you before-hand, that my acquainting you with the way and method how you may have your sins pardoned, will signify nothing unless you resolve to practise what I tell you, and really do it too according to your resolution; for it is not your knowing, but walking in the way to happiness, that will bring you to it.

All such amongst you, therefore, as do really desire to be

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so happy as to have your “transgressions forgiven and your sins covered,” follow but these few directions, and your work is done.

1. First, Acknowledge your sins to God, and bewail your misery before Him; look upon yourselves as “less than the least of all God’s mercies,” as greater than the greatest of all sinners; let the remembrance of your sins be always grievous to you, and the burden of them intolerable; and in an humble sense of your vileness and wretchedness both by nature and practice, upon the bended knees both of body and soul, address yourselves to God, “abhor yourselves, and repent in dust and ashes before Him,” implore His mercy, and acknowledge your own unworthiness of it. And if you thus sincerely confess your sins, He hath promised to pardon them; for Himself hath said, “that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” But you must remember so to confess them with your mouth, as to forsake them too, otherwise your confession will be so far from obtaining a pardon for your other sins, that it itself will need one; “But whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy.” Wherefore if you desire to be so happy as to have your sins pardoned, be so wise as to abhor and leave them. Do not you think that the King of Heaven will forgive your treasons and rebellions against Him, so long as you actually bear arms and fight against Him; but if you throw down your weapons, and become His loyal subjects for the future, you need not fear but upon your submission He will receive you into grace and favour. So that whatsoever sins any of you have been guilty of heretofore, whether sins of omission, or sins of commission, whether sins of a lighter tincture, or sins of a deeper dye, howsoever great, howsoever many, they have been, yet do but now forsake both them and all known sins whatsoever, and walk for the future in all the laws and commandments of God unto the utmost of your power blameless, and then I dare assure you, that your former transgressions shall never be mentioned or remembered against you more; you shall be as free from them as if you never had been guilty of them, and, by consequence, as secure from ruin as if you had been void of sin, and so never
- Gen. 32.  
10.
- Job 41. 6.
- 1 Joh. 1. 6.
- Prov. 28.  
13.

subject to it. I speak not this of myself; No, He Who alone can pardon your sins, hath passed His word for it; for thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Heaven and Earth, to all and every one here present, "Repent and turn Ezek. 18. 30. yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

2. But lastly; although, if you forsake your sins, God will be sure to pardon them, yet you must not think that He therefore pardons them because you forsake them, neither must you expect pardon upon any such account, but only upon the account of Christ, Who came into the world on purpose to save sinners, and was therefore called Jesus, because He came "to save His people from their sins;" and Matt. 1. 21. it is only in "His blood that we have redemption, even the Eph. 1. 7. forgiveness of sins." And therefore, when you have so repented of your sins as to be turned from them, and have done all, or all you can, that is required of you, you must still believe in Christ, and Him alone, for pardon and acceptance; humbly confiding, that in and through the merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ, your former sins that you have now forsaken, shall be, or are forgiven, and both your persons and performances for the future shall be accepted before God. And whosoever of you shall thus repent and believe in Christ, I dare, and do in the Name of Christ pronounce them absolved from their sins, and assert them to be in the number of those blessed souls "whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sins are covered."

Thus have I shewn how great a happiness it is to have our sins pardoned; and how every one here present may attain unto it: which I should now endeavour to persuade you to, but that it would be too great a disparagement to your wisdom and discretion; as supposing you either so distracted in your brains, or debauched in your principles, that you must needs be incited to happiness, and courted into the way that leads to it, or else you will never mind it. But I hope there are none here present, but understand their own interest better than so. I know that you all know yourselves to be sinners, and therefore subject to the wrath of God, and eternal misery. And I have done my duty in acquainting you how you may so escape this your deserved



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misery, as to be invested with real and eternal happiness, by being indemnified from sins, and received into the love and favour of Almighty God. It is now your interest as well as duty, to use the means prescribed for the attainment of so glorious and great an end: even repent and turn from all your sins, and believe in Christ for the pardon for them. Which whosoever here present shall truly and sincerely do, I assure them in the presence of God, and in the Name of Jesus Christ, “their transgressions shall be forgiven, and their sins covered,” their lusts subdued, and their natures cleansed, their persons accepted, and their souls blessed both here and for ever.

## SERMON CXLIV.

OF GOOD WORKS IN GENERAL.

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PSALM xxxvii. 27.

*And do Good.*

WE, “being all conceived in sin, and brought forth in [Ps. 51. 5.] iniquity,” have ever since been doing nothing but conceiving mischief, and bringing forth vanity, our whole lives being nothing else but as one continued sin against Him in Whom we live. Neither is it possible it should be otherwise, so long as we continue such as we came into the world ; for our natures being defiled with sin, all our actions cannot but be so too. Hence it is that we are so often commanded in Holy Scripture to depart from evil, and cease to do evil, because naturally evil is always present with us ; and if at any time we be so assisted by the grace of God as not to sin, we may justly be said to depart from evil, and cease to do that which was wont to be our continual employment.

But, verily, it is such an employment, that, all things considered, we have all the reason in the world to leave it off as soon as we can ; for, so long as we continue sinning, we are certainly the most miserable creatures upon earth ; for, whatsoever our outward enjoyments may seem to be, we are still in a poor and slavish condition, continually employed in the Devil’s drudgery. And howsoever comely the outward man may seem to others, our souls are not only ugly and deformed, but filthy also and loathsome in the eyes of God, Who, being a most pure and holy Being, cannot look upon them without abhorrence and detestation. And whatsoever parts or gifts

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[Job 15.  
16.]

we may fancy ourselves to have, how cunning soever and subtle we may be as to the things of this world, we are still but fools and madmen in God's account, as "drinking down iniquity like water," though we know it to be poison, and preferring the toys and trifles of this deceitful and transient world before eternal happiness and the joys of Heaven. Whatsoever conceits also we may fondly entertain of ourselves and actions, all the while that we continue in sin, we do but act the part of devils incarnate, even carry on the same designs, and follow the same employments, as the fiends of Hell would do, were they in our circumstances, and had flesh and bones like us. And, by consequence, unless we depart from evil, we can expect no other but to depart from God, and to have our part and portion in that everlasting fire which is "prepared for the Devil and his angels."

[Matt. 25.  
41.]

All which being duly considered, I hope there is none here present but look upon themselves as highly concerned to leave sinning as fast as they can, and are steadfastly resolved to use all means which may any ways conduce thereto, as remembering that they are Christians, and the eye of God is always upon them, and that all their actions ere long will be reviewed, and judgment passed upon them accordingly. And, therefore, avoiding all occasions of temptations unto sin, sincerely doing as much as they can themselves, and humbly imploring God's aid and assistance to enable them to do more, firmly believing and trusting on the promises which God to that purpose hath made unto us in Jesus Christ; which whosoever doth, cannot miss of such influences of grace as he stands in need of, whereby he may be enabled to mortify his lusts and depart from evil.

But now we must know, that it is not enough for us "to depart from evil," but we must "do good" too; by the former we may escape Hell, but without the latter we shall never get to Heaven. Neither, indeed, is it possible for us to do the one without the other; no man can "do good," that doth not first "depart from evil;" and no man can "depart from evil," but he must of necessity "do good:" for we are commanded and obliged always to be doing good, and therefore all the while that we are not doing good, we are breaking the command of God, and by consequence are doing

evil ; so that these two are inseparable companions, and it is altogether impossible they should ever be parted, seeing we cannot do good without departing from evil, nor depart from evil without doing good.

Hoping, therefore, or at least supposing, that, the premises being duly considered, you are all resolved already within yourselves, to do your best endeavour, by the assistance of God's grace and Spirit, to leave off, or depart from the several sins which you know yourselves to be guilty of, I shall now endeavour to explain unto you the other part of your duty, even doing good. And the first thing to be known concerning it, is what it is to "do good," or how we may so do every thing as to make it a good work ; and then, secondly, what necessity there is of our thus doing good, and what advantages we shall get by it.

I. The first question is, what it is to "do good?"

A question, which I suppose there is none of you but look upon yourselves as infinitely concerned to understand, and be thoroughly resolved in it. And it is not so easy to understand it aright, as it is generally thought to be ; for certainly there is a very great mystery in it, which we can never be thoroughly instructed in, without a great deal of pains, study, and care. Hence as we are here commanded to "do good," so elsewhere we are enjoined to learn how to do it. "Cease to do evil," saith the Prophet, "and learn to do well;" so that doing well, or doing good, is an art, it seems, which we are all bound to learn, and doubtless it is the highest and most noble art that any mortal can ever attain to ; and yet, I hope, by the blessing of God, to make it so plain unto you, that there is none of you but may understand it as well as you do the particular arts and trades which you are of in the world, so as to know how to manage and carry on your general callings as Christians, as well as the particular callings which you are of as men or citizens ; which being a matter of such great importance to you all, I will endeavour to express it in as plain and perspicuous terms as possibly I can, that the meanest capacity in the congregation may apprehend it. For all persons, of whatsoever rank or condition they be in this world, are equally concerned and obliged to be always doing good ; and most

Isa. 1. 16.  
17.



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people are very apt to be mistaken in it, conceiting they do good, when in truth they do it not, which is mostly to be ascribed to their ignorance of the true nature of good actions, or as we commonly call them good works; which that you may for the future be thoroughly acquainted with, I shall endeavour to explain it in these following particulars.

1. First, therefore, in order to your doing good, it is indispensably necessary that what you do be agreeable to the Law and revealed will of God; for that ought to be the rule of all our actions, and whatsoever we do, is so far good or bad as it agrees with that, or differs from it: for God's will being goodness itself, no action can be any further good, than as it is conformable to that; and therefore if you would, as you should, be always doing good, you must be sure to do nothing but what God hath revealed to be His will, either expressly or else by necessary consequence; if not in particular, howsoever in general terms, so that what you do be at least allowable by the Word of God, and no way forbidden in it, or contrary to it. Hence our blessed Saviour checks the Jews for adhering so much to the traditions of their forefathers, and in the meanwhile neglecting the commands of God. They thought that whatsoever had been transmitted to them from their ancestors by tradition, could not but be good and lawful, yea, commendable and necessary to be done; but our Saviour teacheth them another lesson; "You transgress," saith He, "the commands of God by your traditions." Indeed, it is not any old tradition nor new revelation that can infuse goodness into any action, it is only God's prescription can do it; for nothing is of His accepting but what is some way or other of His commanding. He cannot away with any thing but the performance of His Own will; so that if you do any thing that agrees not with His laws, howsoever specious and plausible, howsoever good and acceptable it may seem to you, He will say to you as He did to the Jews for their over-multiplied fasts, and uncommanded sacrifices, "Who hath required these things at your hands?" And therefore if you would really do good, such as God Himself will accept of, you must not look for the matter of your actions amongst the number of your own roving fancies, nor yet amongst the

Matt. 15. 3.

Isa. 1. 12.

dictates of your own carnal reason, but amongst the precepts of God Himself. “To the Law and to the testimony; if Isa. 8. 20. they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” This is the rule which you are to square your actions by, if you would “prove what is that Rom. 12. 2. holy, good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.” “And Gal. 6. 16. to as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and upon the whole Israel of God.” Indeed they are only the true Israel of God, the really good and pious persons, who walk according to this rule; proportion to which maketh goodness, disproportion to it maketh sin. A thing much to be observed, especially in these days, wherein the impetuous torrent of blind zeal, and erroneous conscientiousness, hath borne down so many deluded souls into a will-worship, and voluntary subjection of themselves to the spurious offspring of their own distracted fancies. If the prince of darkness, or as they call it, the light within them, do but dictate any thing to them, or in plain terms, if they do but conceit or fancy any thing to be their duty, they presently set upon it, without searching, with the good Bereans, into [Acts. 17. 11.] the Word of God, to see whether it be so or no. But this is the way never to do any thing that is truly good; for that we can never do, unless what we do be consonant to the will of God, and we that do it know it to be so too. And therefore if you desire ever to do good, you must be sure to search and study the revealed will of God, and order your conversations according to it, still remembering that God commandeth nothing but what is in itself good, and it is therefore also good because He commandeth it; and He forbiddeth nothing but what in itself is evil, and it therefore is also evil, because He forbids it.

2. Secondly, If you would do that which is truly good, you must not only do what is agreeable to the will of God, but you must therefore only do it because it is so: it is not enough that you do what God commands, unless you have also a respect unto His commanding of it, so as to do it only upon that account, because it is God’s will and pleasure that you should do it, without which, a man may do an action which in itself is good, and yet at the same time not do a good action; I mean, not such an action as God will accept

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Ps. 119. 6.

1 Sam. 15.  
22.

Eph. 6. 5-7.

of as good from men, who being endowed with reasonable souls, it is not sufficient for them to do the bare thing that is commanded them, as the sun, moon, and stars, and all inanimate creatures do, but it is necessary for us to have respect likewise to God's authority and pleasure in commanding of it; "Then shall I not be ashamed," saith David, "when I have respect unto all Thy Commandments;" which is far more than the bare performing of what God commands, and without which nothing that we do is acceptable unto Him. And this is that which the Scriptures call obedience, when we do not only perform what God commands, but do it too in obedience to Him that hath commanded it; of this it is, that God Himself saith, "To obey is better than sacrifice." Thus servants are bound to obey their masters only in obedience to the Lord. And whatsoever it is we do, howsoever good the matter of our actions be, we notwithstanding cannot be said to do good, unless we thus obey God in the doing of it; as, for example, some there are whose very natures, and the constitution of their bodies, carry them in antipathy to lust and luxury; others there are, who even naturally cannot endure to drink beyond their strength, much less to unman and make themselves beasts with drunkenness; others there are who by the natural temper, or perhaps by some distemper in their bodies, are very abstemious, and love not to indulge their appetite with sensual pleasures. Now abstaining from these and the like sins, upon such accounts as these are, although it be good, as it is commanded by God, yet it cannot be called so, as it is performed by them, unless, together with the stream of their natural disposition, there runs likewise a desire to please God, and to obey God; otherwise it is no more than the very brute beasts do, which always act according to the natural frame and constitution of their bodies; and therefore it must needs come short of what is required of us, who can never be said to "do good," but only when we do it in conformity and obedience to the chiefest good; which is indeed the very quintessence of every good work; insomuch, that howsoever great and glorious any work may seem to men, without this obedience, it will never be acceptable to God: so, on the other side, there is never a work so mean, so low, and con-

temptible in the world, but it is very acceptable unto God, if it be but done in obedience to His commands: he that gives a penny to the poor upon this account, doth a better work than others that give pounds: and we have our Saviour's Own word for it, "that he that gives but a cup of cold water upon this account, shall not lose his reward." Matt. 10. 40, 41; Mark 9. 41.

3. Thirdly, It must be done with a willing and a cheerful mind; we cannot obey God's will in what we do, unless we do it with our own wills too; for what we do against our own wills, cannot but be against God's too, because it is His will and command that we serve Him "with a perfect heart and a willing mind." And therefore how specious soever our actions may appear, if there be any secret averseness or reluctancy in ourselves against the doing of them, God will not accept of them when done; because, though our hands may perform them, our hearts do not; and it is the heart that God principally looks at in every thing we do, and commands that we observe what He commands, not only with our hearts, but with all our hearts, cheerfully as well as willingly; so that we cannot do good, unless we rejoice to do it. Eccles. 3. 12. Thus God is said to love a cheerful giver. So also He loves 2 Cor. 9. 7. a cheerful prayer, a cheerful hearer, a cheerful receiver of the Sacrament, a cheerful observer of all His laws. So that not to do a good work cheerfully, is to do it sinfully, and so to make it no good work; for nothing is well-pleasing to God, that is not so to ourselves too; neither can we do any thing in a right manner, unless we do it with a ready mind and cheerful heart.

4. Fourthly; To the performance of a good work, it is necessary also that we do it with all our might; so that you cannot wind up any action, even to the lowest pitch of real goodness, unless you put your whole strength to it, so as to do it with all your hearts and might. I confess a Christian ought to have a broken heart, but must not have a divided heart, one part for the Lord and another for the world: one part for good, and the other for evil: but as we are to love the Lord, so are we to obey His laws with our whole heart Eccles. 9. 10. and soul. Dost thou pray? "Do it with thy might:" unite thy heart, and call in all thy scattered thoughts and affections, and command them to attend upon the Lord their



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[Luke 21.  
4.]

Maker. Dost thou hear? “Do it with thy might:” rally up and summon all the faculties of thy soul and members of thy body, to hearken to what the King of Glory shall speak unto thee. Dost thou give an alms? “Do it with all thy might:” remember the poor widow, that threw in but two mites into the treasury, was more accepted than they that threw in their whole bags, only because she did it to the utmost of her power, and they not. In a word, know this, that God weighs every action in the balance of the sanctuary, and if the least dram of thy strength be wanting in the performance of it, the whole action will be found wanting; wanting goodness in itself, wanting acceptance with God, and wanting a reward for thee that dost it; and so instead of being a good work, it will degenerate into a sinful and evil act.

1 Cor. 10.  
31.

5. But, fifthly, You must be sure to have right intentions in what you do, or else it can never be good; for be the matter which you do, and the manner of doing it too, never so good, if your end be bad, it will spoil all; for it is the end that specifies the action, and though a good end can never make a bad action good, yet a bad end always makes a good action bad. Now the ultimate end of all our actions ought to be to “the glory of God;” and therefore whatsoever you do out of any other design, as for your own credit, applause, profit, or the like, it argues you that do it to be evil, and makes your actions so.

6. Hence, in the next place, howsoever great or good any of your actions seems to be, you must have a care of priding yourselves in it, but still you must keep your hearts possessed with a due sense of your duty unto God, and of your own defects in the performance of it, so as to be still humble in your own eyes; for if thou art proud of any good work thou dost, by that means it immediately ceaseth to be good; and there are three ways especially, whereby thou mayest discover thy priding thyself in any thing thou dost.

[Dan. 4.  
30.]

First, When thou conceitest it to be the work of thine own hands, when thou beginnest to say with Nebuchadnezzar, “Is not this the Babel that I have built? Is not this the stately fabric that I have raised by the greatness of mine own wisdom, and the strength of mine own hand? Was not

my soul the womb of this lovely offspring?" When thou art thus puffed up with the overweening conceit of thine own abilities, when thus thou sacrificest to thine own nets, and burnest incense to thine own drags, thou mayest conclude, that high towering pride hath overwhelmed thee, and made thy action bad; for if thou conceitest that thou dost it by thy own strength, I am sure it cannot be good; it is but the fruit of a bitter root, the stream of a corrupt fountain, and if the Grace of God had assisted thee in doing of it, He would have assisted thee likewise against priding thyself in it. [Hab. 1. 16.]

Secondly, When thou art too forward to expose thy actions to public view, and to send them out to court the multitude, it is a sad sign thou art proud of them; for pride may be seen in naked works, as well as in naked breasts and backs; for if thou thinkest others will like them so well, be sure thyself settest too high an estimate upon them; and therefore our Saviour forewarns not to "do any thing to be seen of men." So that if you would do any thing that is truly good, you must imitate the silkworm, *quæ operitur dum operatur*, 'hides herself all the while she worketh:' thou must clothe thyself with humility, and veil thine actions with the same comely garment, and that is the way to make it acceptable unto God, so as still to remember it is as a certain rule, that the lower thou art in thine own, the higher thou art in God's esteem. Matt. 6.1, 5.

Thirdly, To expect Salvation for thy works, and to think to merit Heaven and eternal happiness by them, is a most certain sign thou art proud of them; for what greater pride can possibly be imagined, than for a silly mortal to think with the slime and mortar of his own natural abilities, to raise up a tower whose top may reach Heaven? For a sinful man to think with the strength of his own hands to take Heaven by violence, and with the price of his own works to purchase eternal glory; this is such a piece of intolerable pride, that whosoever is guilty of it, is so far from doing any good, that the more he doth the worse he is; for this certainly comes little short of that atrocious crime that made Lucifer fall from Heaven, and therefore it cannot but keep men from coming thither. It is true, it is very necessary for us to do good works, but to trust in them is sinful [Gen. 11.4.]

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Luke 17. 10.  
Job 9. 15.  
[35. 7.]

and dangerous, and therefore, in your doing good, you must still observe your Saviour's rule, "that when you have done all, still to account yourselves but unprofitable servants," as Job also did.

7. In the last place, therefore, if ever you would "do good," it must be done by faith; and there is a twofold faith to be exerted in every good work ye do.

First, such a faith whereby you verily believe and are thoroughly persuaded in your consciences, that what you do is lawful in itself, and agreeable to the Word of God, "for whatsoever is not of such a faith is sin."

And then, secondly, such a faith whereby you believe that what you do is acceptable to God, in and through Jesus Christ; "without which faith it is impossible to please God." And the reason is, because there are so many failures and infirmities in our very best performances, that, without Christ, there is more matter of damnation than of Salvation in them; insomuch that thou mayest screw up thy affections to the highest peg in matters of religion; thou mayest give thy body to be burnt, and all thy goods to relieve the poor; thou mayest pray till thy tongue be worn to the stumps, and fast thy body into a skeleton; thou mayest weep thine eyes out for thy sins, and bleed thy heart out for thy transgressions; thou mayest live like an Angel, and die like a Saint, yet if, after all this, thou believest not in Christ, nothing that thou hast done will do thee any good at all, neither was it any good in itself; but this may be written as an epitaph upon thy gravestone, "Here lies one that never did a good work." Whereas, if you do but sincerely endeavour, to the utmost of your power, to act according to the rules I have now prescribed, and then trust and rely upon the promises which are made in Christ for the pardon of your sins, and the acceptance of your endeavours, God, for Christ's sake, will accept both of your persons and performances.

Thus I have endeavoured to shew what it is to do good, and how you may always do it, even by doing such things only as are agreeable to the commands of God, and by doing them only in obedience to the said commands, with a willing heart, and a cheerful mind, to the utmost of your power, sincerely aiming at the glory of God, and not priding your-

selves in what you do, but trusting only on the merit and Mediation of Jesus Christ for the acceptance of what you do. Do thus; and then, although your works be not so perfectly good in themselves as the Law of God requires, yet God, for Christ's sake, will accept of them as good, by reason of that perfect obedience which Christ, for our sakes, performed unto God; so that by this means you may be always doing good, as indeed you ought to be; for you must not think that doing good consists only in some peculiar actions, as in praying, hearing, giving alms, and the like, but it is to extend itself to every action which we do perform, so that whatsoever we do, both may and ought to be a good work. And this is the way to make it so, even by observing the rules which I have endeavoured to explain unto you from Holy Scriptures, concerning the several qualifications and properties which concur to the making of any action good; and whatsoever you do wherein all these qualifications meet together, you may reckon upon it as a good work, and it will be accepted of as so in Christ; but if any one of these necessary requisites be wanting, the whole work is spoiled; for it is a general and certain rule in practical divinity, that *bonum fit ex integris causis, malum ex quolibet defectu*, all the necessary qualifications of a good work are indispensably required to the making of any work good, but any one defect makes it evil; and therefore if you would practise this noble and divine art of always doing good, you must be sure not to omit any one of all the properties which I have mentioned as requisite to the adorning of any action with acceptable goodness. And how mean and low soever any action may seem to others, if all these properties concur in it, you may conclude it, notwithstanding, to be a very good work; so that by this means your very eating and drinking, your trading and trafficking in the world, may be a good work; for you may and ought to do good in the meanest and commonest, as well as the greatest and most sublime actions of your whole life. And it is both your duty and interest always to do so from one end of the week to the other, from one end of the year, yea, from one end of your lives to the other; so as not to leave the least chink or cranny of your time unstopped with good works, but as you are always to "depart

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from doing evil," so are you always to be "doing good." But such amongst you as have some dear and pleasing Delilah, in whose wanton lap they would sometimes be dandled, some right eye, or some right hand, which they are loth to part with; such, I say, may think this to be strange doctrine, that they must be always doing good. What, saith the covetous worldling, may I never fall down and worship my blessed Mammon? the times are hard, and may I not one day be carking, careful, and surfeit myself upon the cares of this world, but I must presently be condemned for a sinner? What, saith the brutish epicure, may I never screw up my pampered heart to a pitch beyond the reach of sorrow? not pass one minute of my slow-paced time in mirth, in frolics, and delights? What, saith the slothful drone, must I be always tiring myself, and torturing my painful days in toil and travel? must I needs be always doing, yea, and good too? What, saith the jovial drunkard, must I always be denied the blessed privilege of a civil rejoicing cup? what, may I not sometimes solace myself, and drink away my cares and troubles, but must I always be tormented with this tedious work of doing good? What, saith the lascivious person, may I not sometimes rejoice myself with the sweetest delicacies of love? and when the beauties of the world present themselves to the sprightly view of my youthful eye, may not I dwell one moment upon the amorous contemplation of such rare perfections? What, saith the vain-glorious person, may I not set apart one week, not one day, to the entailing the memory of my noble person to succeeding generations? believe me, the time I live is but short, and may I not spend a little of it to write my name in the everlasting chronicles of fame? Such are the pleas of sinful men in behalf of their darling but pernicious sin. They could be content to shake hands with them sometimes upon condition to meet again; but to bid them adieu, farewell for ever, never to meet again, nor enjoy their pleasures more, this is a killing, a tormenting word indeed. What, saith every such sinful soul amongst you, in your hearts at least, though not in your mouths; What, must I never please myself again in the sweet embraces of my beloved sin? must I always be chained up to so strict and holy a life? must I

never take my swing, nor use my former liberty again? This is a hard saying indeed, who can bear it? This is a life for the pure and uncorruptible Angels, but, alas! it is a work too hard, a task too difficult for frail and mortal men. It is true, it is a hard and difficult work indeed; but assure yourselves, in the presence of Almighty God, it is no more than what every soul here present is bound to do, even always to be doing good unto the utmost of their power. For thus saith the Apostle himself from the eternal God, "therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmov- 1Cor.15.58.  
able, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." So that it is your duty not only to be always doing good, but to the utmost of your power to be always abounding too in the doing of it. But it seems the Apostle himself knew this to be very hard to flesh and blood, and therefore adds the following motive and encouragement to it, "forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." And I shall endeavour to follow his example, and present you with such considerations, as, by the blessing of Almighty God, may incite and encourage you to a continuance in well-doing, to a serious and steadfast resolution at least to begin at this very moment, and so to continue all your life long, in a religious devotion of yourselves to the service of the living God, and a constant endeavour to "do good."

II. Think, therefore, with yourselves what it is that you would have, what do your souls desire in the whole world: be but always doing good, and I assure you you shall have it. Is it riches? is it honours? is it pleasure? is it peace? is it friends? is it good company? is it long life? why all these things are entailed upon all them, and only them that "do good;" and, by consequence, shall be made over to every person here present that doth so, and made sure unto you, not by the law of men, which is often deficient, but by the Gospel of Christ, which can never fail.

1. First, "do good," and thou shalt be a rich man. I put this in the forefront of all the other considerations, because I suppose it to be the strongest and most prevalent; for what do most men in the world look after but this? what is

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the great reason that you advise, contrive, project, are so eager in compassing of sea and land, always troubling your careful brains ; what is the reason I say of all this do and stir, this running to and fro in the world, but only to possess yourselves of wealth and riches ? so that I think I may take it for granted, that you all desire to be rich ; but let me tell you withal, it is impossible for you to be so unless you “do good,” and as impossible for you not to be so, if you do ; for

Prov. 10. 22. as the wise man tells you, “it is the blessing of God that maketh rich.” It is not heaps of refined earth that can make a man rich ; neither can sumptuous houses and pleasant gardens do it, which, in this respect, are no more than castles in the air, or a fool’s paradise, wherein men may fancy safety or delight, but be sure can find none. No, it is nothing but the blessing, the love and favour of Almighty God, that maketh a man truly rich, and that be sure none hath but such only as are and “do good ;” but all such cannot miss of it, nor fail of being rich both here and hereafter. For

1 Tim. 4. 8. godliness or true goodness hath “the promise both of this life and also of that which is to come.” And, therefore, let the blind conceits of worldly-minded men be what they will, the good man is the only rich man even upon earth ; for as he shall have all things hereafter, he wants nothing here. A good man, he wants not the very things he hath not, whereas a sinner wants those very things he hath, as to the right use and enjoyment of them. And again, you will all conclude him to be a rich man indeed that hath his whole heart’s desire, that hath as much as he either doth or can wish to have : but he that truly is and doth good, he hath whatsoever he desires : for a good man, be sure, will desire nothing but what he hath, godliness always bringing contentment with

1 Tim. 6. 6. it ; and you know the Apostle’s rule, “godliness with contentment is great gain.” And more than that too, he that is truly good, not only hath what he doth, but what he can, desire. I suppose there may be many of you that hear me at this time, who are rich in this world : but how much soever any of you have, I am sure none of you but do, or at least can, desire more ; and therefore if you speak of riches, you must needs acknowledge yourselves to come far short of real Saints, unless yourselves be so too. For what

if ye can say, such houses, such lands, such revenues are mine; what is this in comparison of him that can say, God is mine? For he that can say so, as every good man may, it is impossible for him to desire more than he hath; for, if God be thine, all He is is thine, and all He hath is thine; His wisdom thine to direct thee, His power thine to protect thee, His mercy thine to pardon thee, His all-sufficiency thine to supply thee, His grace thine to make thee holy, His glory thine to make thee happy for ever; so that there can be no proportion at all betwixt the riches of the greatest sinner and poorest Saint in the world; the one may have carnal, the other hath spiritual, the one may have earthly, the other heavenly, the one may have temporal, the other hath eternal riches; the one may be rich in gold and silver and suchlike trash, which are no further riches than as they are fancied to be so, but the other is rich indeed, rich in faith, rich in grace, rich in love to God, and in good works, rich in time, and rich unto all eternity, having in possession all he doth, and in reversion more than he can desire; and therefore, if you desire to be truly rich, you must endeavour to be truly good; you must learn to do well, for that certainly is the most profitable and gainful trade or calling that it is possible for any soul to follow. For hereby you may be certain to attain to riches, not such riches "as make <sup>[Prov. 23. 5.]</sup> themselves wings and fly away," but such as will give wings to you to mount up "to an inheritance incorruptible, unde- <sup>1 Pet. 1. 4.</sup> filed, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you."

2. Secondly; Do good and live pleasantly in the world. And I suppose I may rank a good part of you under this head; such, I mean, whose serious studies and constant work it is to paraphrase upon the various texts of pleasure and delight, who cannot endure to wear away your short-lived days in the sullen, melancholy, and dejected shades of sadness. To you it is I say, there is no way of obtaining your desires to live pleasantly in the world, but only by doing good; for they are the ways of wisdom only that "are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace." <sup>Prov. 3. 17.</sup> Yea, a man cannot "do good," unless he rejoice to do it, so that there cannot but be joy in every good act he doth.



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And one of the good works which we are always to do, is to rejoice in the Lord, and to joy in the God of our Salvation; for we are expressly commanded to “rejoice evermore,” and to “rejoice in the Lord always.” And therefore sadness is a mere heresy in practical religion, and no man can be good and sad too at the same time, it being our very duty to rejoice always, and that in the Lord too, Who is not only the best, but the only object of all true joy and happiness: so that one who is constantly doing good, and always walking in all the Commandments of God blameless, he may justly be termed a spiritual Dives, one “that fares deliciously every day,” his soul being continually transported with the contemplation of God’s perfections, and his heart delighted in obeying His commands. Thus our Saviour looked upon it as His meat and drink “to do the will of His Father.” And David thought it to be “sweeter than honey and the honey-comb.” And I dare say, there is never a soul amongst you that hath exercised himself in doing good, but hath sometimes found more real joy, complacency, and satisfaction of mind in one good work, than in all the pleasures of the world besides; and if these *πρωτοπρωτοι*, these ‘prælibations,’ and fine tastes of the grapes of Canaan, of Heaven’s glory, be so unspeakably pleasant, and so ravishingly delightsome, what will the full meal be? If one drop be so transporting, who then can express the joy which will fill our hearts when we bathe ourselves in the rivers of pleasure which are at God’s right hand for evermore.

3. Thirdly; “Do good,” and thou wilt have honours, as well as riches and pleasures; and this is another thing which many of you, I know, are very ambitious of; but it is in vain for you to expect it any other way, but only by doing good. For whatsoever honour and renown you may fancy to yourselves so long as sinners, you are certainly the vilest and most despicable creatures upon earth; but so soon as you depart from evil and do good, then you begin to honour God; and God Himself saith, “them that honour Me, I will honour.” And this is true honour indeed, to be honoured and highly esteemed, not by our fellow-creatures only, but by our greatest Creator, the only Fountain of all

true honour. Hence He elsewhere saith, "Since thou hast Isa. 43. 4. been precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable." But every one that doeth good is precious in God's sight, and therefore must needs be honourable. Insomuch, that howsoever despicable any of you may seem in men's sight, do but "depart from evil and do good," and thou wilt be honourable: honourable in thy person, thy very presence will be grave and majestic: honourable in thy titles, being called God's *סגל*, His 'treasure,' one of His peculiar people, a king and a priest to God: honourable in thy relations, thou wilt have God for thy Father, and Christ for thy elder brother: honourable in thy free admission to the Throne of grace, having constant access into the presence and favour of the King of kings: honourable in the communication of secrets, for the secrets of the Lord are with them that fear [Ps. 25. 14.] Him; they are all, as it were, of His cabinet-council: honourable in thy supplies and maintenance, having Omnipotence itself, and All-sufficiency to supply thy wants, and provide thy daily food: honourable in thy residence, thy conversation being always in Heaven, and so thy residence in the court of the King of Glory: honourable in thy train and retinue, having the holy Angels themselves to minister unto thee: and honourable in thy continual employments, doing good being itself the highest and most honourable employment that it is possible for any one to be engaged in; for this is the employment of Heaven; this was the employment of Christ when He was upon earth, for "He always Acts 10. 38. went about doing good;" yea, this is the employment of the eternal God Himself, for "He is good and doth good." And Ps. 119. 68. if this be not, I know not what is, or can be accounted honour.

4. Fourthly, "Do good," and thou wilt attain to true wisdom and understanding; for this can neither be gotten nor manifested any way but only by doing good. By this means it was that David attained to so much understanding: "I have more understanding," saith he, "than all 119. 99, 100. my teachers; for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts;" and, "through Thy precepts I get understanding." 119. 104. I do not deny, but one in his sins may have some general

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notions of good and evil ; but as Adam before he had eaten of “ the tree of knowledge of good and evil,” knew evil only notionally, afterwards he knew it experimentally ; so, as soon as ever thou departest from evil and doest good, as thou before knewest good only notionally, then thou wilt know it experimentally ; thou wilt then know how good a thing it is to “ do good ;” yea, Christ Himself hath promised to manifest Himself to such a one. And so by doing good, thou wilt come to know God and goodness experimentally here, and perfectly hereafter.

John 14. 21.

5. Fifthly, “ Do good,” and thou wilt have many and good friends ; a thing that most desire, and therefore plot and contrive all ways to insinuate into the acquaintance, and flatter themselves into friendship with others : but all is in vain ; for there is no friendship sure and lasting but what is got by fair dealing, I mean by well-doing ; by which means thou mayest have, first, Christ to be thy friend, and I suppose you will all grant it is no small privilege to have a friend at court. Yet all that “ do good” have the greatest favourite in the court of Heaven, the King’s only Son, to be their friend : “ Ye are My friends,” saith He, “ if ye do whatsoever I command you ;” not only that they are friends to Him, but He will be a friend to them too. Nay, secondly, thou wilt not only have a friend at court, but the Court itself will be thy friend, for God will be thy friend, and He will account thee His friend too, as He did Abraham, saying, “ Abraham my friend.” Oh ! what an astonishing mercy, what a glorious privilege is this ; that if thou doest good, God should say of thee as He did of him, such or such a one, “ My friend !” And if He be thy friend, all the Saints and Angels in Heaven, all the creatures in the world shall be thy friends ; “ the very beasts and stones of the field shall be at league with thee,” yea, thy very foes shall prove thy friends, and “ all things work together for thy good.”

ch. 15. 14.

Isa. 41. 8.

Job 5. 23.

[Prov. 16.

7.]

Rom. 8. 28.

6. Hence, in the next place, “ do good,” and thou shalt have peace, a blessing peculiar to those that “ do good ;” for “ there is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked ;” and the reason is, because there is no way imaginable to attain peace, but only by doing good. “ Depart from evil,” said David, “ and do good, seek peace and pursue it :” as if he should

Isa. 48. 22 ;  
57. 21.

Ps. 34. 14.

have said, The only way to seek peace and pursue it, is to "depart from evil and do good:" by this means thou wilt be at peace with thyself, with thine own conscience, yea, and with God Himself; so that "the peace of God which pass-  
eth all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus." And if God be once at peace with thee, thou mayest be confident He will never leave thee nor forsake thee; His love and favour will always stick by thee; thy riches may fail thee, thy honours may fail thee, thy pleasures, thy wisdom, thy friends upon earth, may all fail thee, but be sure God will never fail thee, but always speak peace and comfort unto thee. Phil. 4. 7.

7. Lastly, "do good," and thou shalt live long. This is that which I dare say you all desire, but none can have it, but only such as "depart from evil and do good." Hence David in my text joins these two together; "Depart from evil and do good, and dwell for evermore." Not only live, but dwell, so as to live safely in a quiet habitation for evermore; and verily, although the other arguments which I have produced may not have done the work, this consideration, methinks, should effectually excite and engage you all to "depart from evil and do good;" for I am sure here is never a soul amongst you but desires to live, yea, to live for ever; but that you can never do, unless ye "depart from evil and do good," which if you will for the future do, I dare assure you in the Name of the Most High God, in Whose presence you now are, you shall always live. I do not say you shall never die, but this I say, that you shall always live. One death you must undergo: death did I say? No, it shall not be so much death to you, as an entrance into a better life; though thy soul may be separated from thy body, neither soul nor body shall ever be separated from thy God; but thou shalt live in the continual contemplation and enjoyment of His Divine perfections for evermore. So that if you "do good," in time, in and through Christ, you shall both receive, and enjoy, all manner of good unto eternity.

Now put these things together, and consider seriously with yourselves what extraordinary advantages and benefits will accrue unto you, if you "depart from evil and do good;"



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how that then you will be possessed of the truest riches, transported with the greatest pleasures, invested with the highest honours, endowed with the only wisdom, beloved of the surest friends, blessed with the best peace, and advanced to eternal life. Consider these things, I say, and tell me, whether you do not really think it worth your while to learn and practise this profitable, as well as noble and pleasant art of doing good? For my part, if such considerations as these are will not prevail upon you to do it, I know not what can. But I have more charity for you than to think that any of you are so ignorant and insensible of your own interest, as to stand out any longer against such considerations as these are; and therefore I hope you are already resolved within yourselves to do the best of your endeavours for the future, to “depart from evil and do good;” which none of you but may yet attain to; for God is ready, for Christ’s sake, to accept of what you sincerely do, and to assist your weak endeavours with His Own grace. Do you, therefore, but what you can, and trust in the merit and Mediation of Jesus Christ for God’s assistance and acceptance of you, and neither of them will be ever denied unto you; but you will soon be enabled to do whatsoever good is required of you, and so to attain to whatsoever good is promised to you. And then what happy, what glorious creatures will you soon be! Never a soul of you, but what would ere long be a glorified Saint in Heaven. Which, that you may all be, let me advise you not to be hearers only, but doers of the word. Begin this day, this hour, to set yourselves in good earnest to “depart from evil and do good,” and then you have God’s word for it, that you shall dwell with Him for evermore.

## SERMON CXLV.

OF PRAYER.

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ACTS x. 4.

*And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.*

OF all the arts and sciences which it is possible for any one to learn, there is none like that of doing good, the art of refining all our actions into good works, which there is never a soul amongst us but by nature is capable of, and by Christ may attain unto, if ye would but seriously set yourselves about it; for the Scriptures do clearly discover to you the several qualifications which are necessarily required to the making of any action good; all which may briefly be reduced to these heads, that whatsoever we do be agreeable to the revealed will of God, at least no way forbidden by it, or contrary to what is commanded in it, and then that we do not only what God commands, but therefore do it because God commands it; that all our actions proceed from a principle of obedience to the Supreme Governor of the world: and as what we do must be according to God's will, so we must do it with our own wills too, still observing David's rule, to "serve the Lord with a perfect heart, and a willing mind," [1 Chron. 28. 9.] so as to do every thing we set upon, with all our hearts, yea, and "with all our might" and mind, so as to make God's glory the ultimate end of all our actions, and not to intend [Eccl. 9. 10.] any thing of carnal pleasure, profit, or applause in doing of [1 Cor. 10. 31.] them; neither to pride ourselves in them when done, but when we have done all, still to account ourselves "but as [Luke 17. 10.]

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unprofitable servants," and therefore rely and depend only upon the merit of Jesus Christ, for the acceptance of what we do in the sight of God, humbly confiding, that in and through Christ, God will pardon the manifold imperfections of our best performances, and accept of our sincere, though weak endeavours. And if we thus do what we can, although our actions be not so perfectly good as the Law of God requires, God, for Christ's sake, will accept of what we do as good, by reason of that perfect, extraordinary, and Divine obedience, Which His Own Son for our sakes performed unto Him. By this means, therefore, we may do good works, such as are and will be acceptable unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

[Ps. 34.  
14.]

And verily, if we mind either our present interest, or the eternal concerns of our immortal souls, we must endeavour unto the utmost of our power thus to "do good," without which it is impossible for us ever to be happy either in this life or that which is to come. For unless we be and do good, whatsoever earthly riches we may fancy ourselves to have, we are really but poor and empty creatures, destitute of every thing that is truly good for us. Whatsoever sensual pleasures we may have to gratify our flesh, we are altogether strangers to all true joy and happiness. Whatsoever worldly honours may be conferred upon us, we are still but vile and despicable sinners; we may please ourselves with the conceit of our cunning and subtilty, but we are still mere naturals, no better than fools and madmen in God's account. And whatsoever friends we may have on earth, be sure we have none in Heaven. Whatsoever outward peace we may enjoy, we can have none either with God, or our own consciences. And though we may rub on for a while, we are continually subject both to temporal and eternal death, to have our souls separated from our bodies, and both

[Isa. 59. 2.]

soul and body separated from God and goodness. Whereas, on the other side, if we really be, and sincerely endeavour always to do good, nothing really evil can befall us, nothing truly good will be withholden from us: we may have no earthly, but as for heavenly and everlasting riches, we shall have them in abundance; we may have nothing to please our senses, but all things imaginable to satisfy and delight our

souls; we may be despised by men, but we shall be honoured by Saints and Angels, yea, by God Himself, Who is the only fountain of all true honour. At present we may be reckoned fools and idiots, but at long run we shall be acknowledged by all to be the wisest of men; all about us may be our enemies, but we shall have two good friends which will always stand by us, God above and our own consciences within us, with which we shall always be at peace, whatsoever bustles or tumults happen in the world; and how long or short soever our lives be upon earth, we are sure to live for evermore in Heaven; so that if you be either covetous of lasting riches, desirous of satisfying pleasures, or ambitious of real honours, if you would be either instructed in true wisdom, beloved of faithful friends, blessed with inward peace, or advanced to eternal life, do good, and your desires shall be all fulfilled, yea, you will most certainly have infinitely more than as yet it is possible for you to imagine, or by consequence to desire.

Now these things being duly and truly weighed, I hope you are all resolved, by the assistance and blessing of the Most High God, to be always doing good for the future unto the utmost of your power, wherein I shall endeavour, as God shall enable me, to be further assistant to you; and for that end, having shewn you how to do good in general, for your better understanding the nature and practice of good works, I shall explain unto you some of those particular acts wherein you are all bound in a more especial manner to be always doing good; whereof you have two mentioned in my text, with a particular approbation of God Himself; and they are prayers and alms, which are here recorded in a peculiar manner to be had in remembrance before God; “and he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.”

For the opening of which words, we must know, that in Our Saviour and His Apostles' time, and a long while after, Palestine or Judea was subject to the Roman empire, and therefore was governed by a president sent from Rome, who resided at Cæsarea, at that time the metropolis of Judæa, formerly called *Σαργάτωνος πύργος*; but when Herod had enlarged and adorned it, in honour of Cæsar, Emperor of Rome, he



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named it Cæsarea ; it was about sixty miles from Hierusalem.

The Roman president keeping his court here, he had several soldiers under his command, and over every hundred soldiers there was a captain, who was therefore called *centurio*, the commander of an hundred ; and amongst others, there was one Cornelius, a centurion, or captain in the Apostles' days, about three or four years after our Saviour's ascension into Heaven. This Cornelius, a centurion or captain of the Italian band at Cæsarea, although by birth he was a Gentile, yet by his frequent conversing with the Jews in Palestine, he attained to the knowledge of the true God, the Creator and Governor of the world, (as many at that time did besides him,) and so he became a proselyte. But we must know there were two sorts of proselytes amongst the Jews ; some were called גרי צדק, 'proselytes of righteousness, and proselytes of the Covenant ;' those embraced the whole Mosaic dispensation, they were circumcised, offered, and sacrificed as the Jews did, and in every thing enjoyed the same privileges, as if they had been born Jews ; the other were גרים תושבים, *proselyti inquilini*, these were not circumcised, nor bound to observe the ceremonial Law, but only the more necessary points of the moral Law ; as to avoid idolatry, but to worship only the true God ; not to commit fornication, murder, nor robbery, but to be just and to abstain from things strangled ; which were called the seven precepts given to Noah, as Maimonides a Jewish writer asserts. Now such a kind of proselyte was Cornelius, and many others in those times, and are often mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, under the name of σεβόμηντοι, 'devout men,' or worshippers of the true God, as Acts xvii. 4 ; xiii. 43 ; xvi. 14.

Cornelius therefore, although he was no such Jewish proselyte as to be circumcised, and observe all the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic Law, and therefore was reputed by the Jews but as a Gentile and unclean ; yet notwithstanding, he was so far instructed in the knowledge of the true God, that he had not only renounced his former idolatry wherein he was bred and born, but he lived up too unto the light which he had received, constantly and conscientiously performing his devotions to Almighty God, to the utmost of his knowledge and power, and expressing his piety

towards God, by his charity to the poor, as is here expressly asserted. And it is very probable, that there being now Acts 10.1,2. a new religion started in the world, wherein the true God was worshipped as well as in the Jewish, he made it his daily prayer and request to Almighty God, to be instructed in the right way, and directed to that religion wherein he might attain to everlasting Salvation. And although he certainly could neither pray nor do any good work as yet as he ought to do it, yet doing it as well as he could, God that never fails them that do what they can, was pleased to have so much mercy upon him, as to send an Angel on purpose from Heaven, to direct him to one of Christ's Disciples, Peter by name, who should tell him what he must further do. It is true, God might have given the Angel commission to have told him himself, that he must believe in Jesus Christ that was crucified at Hierusalem a little while before; but there being Ministers settled upon earth for that purpose, God chose rather to send him to one of them, to teach all after-ages that they must not now expect revelations from Heaven, to be directed in their way thither, but should apply themselves to the ministry for that end.

The Angel that was sent came to Cornelius at the ninth hour of the day, that is, at three o'clock in the afternoon, at which time Cornelius was at his devotions, that being ch. 10. 30. anciently an hour of prayer. Cornelius being startled, as well he might, at the sight of so glorious a person, the Angel addresses himself unto him in this gracious and comfortable language, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up as a ver. 5, 6. memorial before God; and now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side; he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." Where we may observe how punctual the Angel was in describing the person he was to send for; by the city where he lodged, Joppa; by both his names, Simon and Peter; by his name where he lodged, Simon; by his landlord's calling, he was a tanner; and by the situation of his house, it was by the sea-side; and all, to shew how accurate we should be in matters of religion, and in whatsoever concerns our eternal happiness, as the Angel here was in directing Cornelius to St. Peter, describing him by all these circumstances, lest he

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should be mistaken in the man, and so fail in his expectations from him; which were to know what he should further do: "he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." From whence it is plain, that notwithstanding the extraordinary piety and devotion of Cornelius, who was certainly as great a moralist as ever lived, yet he had something still to do, which as yet he did not know of, without which he could never get to Heaven; he must send to Simon Peter to be instructed in the faith of Christ; which doubtless is as clear a demonstration as possibly can be desired, that all the devotion and good works imaginable can never bring us to Heaven without Christ. And, therefore, although it be indispensably necessary that we do good works, yet we must not trust on them, but only on Christ for happiness and Salvation.

Acts 4. 12.

But now for the excellency and necessity of good works, as likewise their acceptableness unto God, we have here a very remarkable instance in the first words of the Angel's message to Cornelius, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God," or "are had in remembrance in the sight of God," as it is expressed, v. 31; that is, God hath taken special notice of them all along, and still keeps them in His mind, so as graciously to reward thee for them. From whence it is obvious to observe, how acceptable prayers and alms are unto Almighty God, and how well pleased He is with them, and how graciously He was pleased to reward Cornelius for them, by directing him to the way that leads to everlasting life, yea, and to send an Angel from Heaven on purpose to do it; whereby Cornelius was not only very highly honoured, by having an Angel to wait upon him, and to bring this blessed message to him, but he was likewise thereby fully assured of God's special grace and mercy to him, and was so fully instructed in the way to happiness, that he is doubtless now a glorified Saint in Heaven. So that although his prayers and alms could not bring him to Heaven alone, they, it seems, were the occasion of his being directed in the way thither, as the Angel intimates to him in these words, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."

Seeing, therefore, we all, I hope, are desirous to do such works as are acceptable to Him that made us, and nothing

being more plain than that prayers and alms are so, I shall endeavour to search more narrowly into the true nature of them, that we may all understand how to perform them so that “our prayers and alms too, may go up for a memorial before God,” as the Angel here says Cornelius’s did.

To begin, therefore, with prayer, a duty continually incumbent upon us, and therefore the more necessary to be rightly understood by us. And that ye may clearly apprehend whatsoever is necessary to be known concerning it, I shall shew,

I. The nature of it in general.

II. The reasons why it is so acceptable unto God.

III. The manner how we may so perform it, that God may accept of it.

As for the first, the nature of prayer in general, it is rightly defined by Damascene, to be, *Ἀνάστασις νοῦ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν*, ‘the ascent of the mind to God.’ When the soul lays aside the thoughts of all things else, and converses only with God, then it is properly said to pray; so that as in hearing God speaks to us, so in praying we speak to God. So that prayer hath an immediate reference to God Himself, the soul at such a time applying itself only unto God. And all that we ought to think or speak in prayer may be reduced to these general heads, confession, petition, and thanksgiving.

i. For the first, when we speak to so glorious a Majesty as God is, we ought, in the first place, to acknowledge and confess our own unworthiness to appear before Him, or to receive any mercy from Him, by reason of the manifold and great transgressions that we have committed against Him. Thus Ezra, in his prayer to God, made an humble confession Ezra, 9.6,7. of his own and his people’s sins; thus David prayed, and Ps. 51.1—5. Daniel. And that this prayer of Daniel was very acceptable Dan. 9.3-5, &c. unto God is plain, in that it was no sooner got to Heaven, but an Angel was immediately despatched from thence to certify Daniel that he was a person greatly beloved, and to ver. 20—23. acquaint him how his prayer was heard. And certainly nothing is more reasonable in itself, nor more acceptable to God, than to confess our sins every time we go to Him against Whom they were committed.

ii. And as we are to confess our sins unto Him, so are we to beg for mercy from Him, which is that part of prayer which



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we call petition, which is so great a part of prayer, that it is ordinarily put for the whole. And the prayer which our blessed Saviour Himself composed and stamped with Divine authority, consisteth mostly of petitions or requests put up to our Father Which is in Heaven. Neither is there any thing whatsoever that is truly good for us, but if we want it, we may and ought to ask it of God, Who is not only the chiefest good in Himself, but the only fountain of all good to His creatures; so that whatsoever it is that we want, we are still to go to Him for it, whether it be for our souls or bodies, for this life or that which is to come; and that either for ourselves or others, yea, for our very enemies.

<sup>1</sup>Tim. 2.1, 2.  
Matt. v. 44.

iii. And as we must desire of God what we want, so must we praise Him for what we have, not only by giving Him formal thanks for such or such mercies which He hath bestowed upon us, but especially by magnifying and extolling His great and all-glorious Name, by confessing and acknowledging Him to be the supreme Possessor and Disposer of all things, that every good and perfect gift comes from Him that is above. Hence in the Hebrew, the usual word for thanksgiving is תודה, which properly signifies ‘confession,’ because the thanks we give to God for the mercies we have received from Him, consists principally in confessing that it is from Him alone that we have received them. And this is the only way likewise whereby it is possible for us to praise God, even by acknowledging Him to be what He is, a God infinitely great and glorious in Himself, infinitely good and gracious in His Son to all that love and fear Him. Hence the same Hebrew word that signifies to confess, when it is referred to God, properly signifies to praise Him; as where it is said, “Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness;” in the Hebrew it is יודו ליהוה חסדו, ‘Oh, that men would confess to the Lord His goodness;’ that is, confess Him to be good, and wonderful in His dealings to mankind. Thus the Divine hymn composed by St. Ambrose begins with the proper notion of praise, “We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord;” that is, ‘We praise Thee, by acknowledging that Thou art the Lord, the Supreme Being and Governor of the whole world.’ And verily this is so necessary a part of prayer, that our

Ps. 107. 8.

blessed Saviour hath taught us both to begin and end our daily prayers with it, beginning with "Our Father Which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name," and then ending with, "for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Now, if we take prayer in this general sense, as it comprehends these several ways of addressing ourselves to the Most High God, we must needs conclude it to be a thing very acceptable and well-pleasing to Him, and that which, if rightly performed, He takes pleasure and delight in, as the wise man tells us; "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is His delight;" which also appears in that He hath made this the only means whereby to obtain any mercy at His hands. Prov. 15. 8.

And if you would know the reasons wherefore prayer is so acceptable unto God, I think they may be reduced to these heads briefly.

1. First; in praying, we come as near as we can to the principal end of our creation, which was to converse and enjoy communion with God, and to praise and extol His Name. God was infinitely happy from all eternity in the enjoyment of His Own perfections; howsoever, of His infinite goodness He was pleased to make the world, and amongst other creatures to make man, and that in His Own image and similitude, on purpose that he might know, admire, and praise his Maker. He did not intend that you should spend your time in getting estates, gratifying your flesh, or aspiring after the impertinent applause of men, but that you should be always adoring and extolling Him; and therefore, so long as you are doing any thing else, you do as much as in you lies to frustrate the end of your creation; but whilst you are praying and praising God, you do the work which you were made, and at first designed for; and, therefore, it cannot but be a matter very acceptable to God, because you endeavour at least to fulfil His end in creating of you.

2. Secondly; hereby also you acknowledge His supremacy over and propriety in the world, by paying your daily homage and tribute of thanks to Him for the blessings which you do enjoy, and by applying yourselves to Him only for the obtaining of those you want. Such as are not constant

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and conscientious in the performance of this duty, live as without God in the world, as if they had no dependence upon Him, nor were beholden to Him for what they have, and so forget in what tenure they hold their estates, and what they do enjoy, or at least they do not acknowledge it; whereas by your daily praying to Him for what you want, and praising Him for what you have, you testify your acknowledgment that you are but tenants at will, and that He is the universal Landlord, the Supreme Proprietor of all things, and so that you hold your estates only under Him, and, by consequence, that they are still at His disposal, and that you are bound to employ them only in His service, and according to His pleasure and command, which cannot but be very acceptable to Him.

Ps. 50. 23.

Ps. 24. 1.

3. Especially considering, in the last place, that hereby you give Him the glory due unto His Name, which is the ultimate end of His, and ought to be of all our actions: “Whoso offereth praise,” saith God, “glorifieth Me.” And so whosoever prays too doth the same; for hereby you do not only acknowledge His dominion over the world, and His propriety in all things in it, “that the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof;” but hereby you acknowledge likewise His Omnipresence, that He is always present with you; His Omniscience, that He always knows and hears what you say unto Him; His all-sufficiency, that He is able to supply you; and His infinite grace and mercy, in that He is willing to help and succour you. And now, as God is well pleased with Himself, and takes infinite delight in the contemplation of His Own Divine perfections, so He cannot but be well pleased likewise with having His perfections thus acknowledged and adored by His creatures, and in a particular manner by men, whom He was pleased to make for that only purpose to glorify Him; and therefore He hath so composed our natures, that it is our happiness as well as duty to do it, so that it will be our constant work in Heaven, as it ought to be upon earth.

It is no question, therefore, but that prayer duly performed is a duty very acceptable unto God. But the great question is, How you and I may so perform it, that it may be acceptable to Him, “that our prayers may go up,” as

Cornelius's did, "for a memorial before God?" For howsoever acceptable prayer be in itself unto Him, we must not think that He is well pleased with every thing that goes under the name of prayer amongst us, which I think was never so much abused before, as it has been and still is in our age; for some do nothing but mutter over a company of hard words in an unknown tongue, and though they understand not what themselves say, yet they are not ashamed to call this praying; others make a long oration, seemingly directed to the great God, of what comes next to their tongues' end, and this without any more ado, they call by the sacred name of prayer; others, if they do but read or run over a parcel of words and phrases, or hear them read, especially if they do it with some outward show of reverence and devotion, they presently conclude that they have been at prayers, yea, that themselves have done this acceptable work to God, whereas, alas! there is nothing of all this but a man may do, and yet not pray at all: for prayer is certainly the greatest work that it is possible for creatures to be engaged in; and therefore to the due performance of it there must needs be required the highest intent of the mind, the greatest composure of the thoughts, seriousness of the will, and ardency of affections, as well as the most solemn expressions of reverence and humility imaginable, So that it must needs be the hardest as well as the highest work that we can ever be employed about; neither can it ever be rightly performed without a great deal of care, study, and pains about it. For as there is a great mystery in doing well in general, so is there in praying in particular, which is an art no less difficult in itself, than it is advantageous to those that learn and practise it: and therefore prayer is not a thing to be played with, or carried on in a careless and perfunctory manner; but, as it is the best and most acceptable duty that we can perform, so is it to be performed with the greatest seriousness and devotion that we can possibly raise up our spirits to; otherwise, howsoever acceptable it be in itself, it will not be accepted from us.

III. Wherefore hoping, that, as you desire to go to Heaven in good earnest, so you desire also to perform this as well as all other religious duties in good earnest too, and



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not to content yourselves with such a formal and customary way of praying as others, and perhaps yourselves too hitherto have done, I shall endeavour to give you some light and insight into the true nature of it at this time, and shew you how you may all perform it acceptably to the living God; for, as it is my desire that every soul here present may ere long be advanced to eternal glory, so it must be my care and study to inform your judgments aright concerning the true nature of such duties as are necessary in order to it, whereof this is one of the first and greatest; and therefore I shall not put you off with any vain and impertinent discourse upon so high and divine a subject as this is, but shall endeavour to shew you, in a plain and familiar way, what is of absolute necessity to the due performance of it: and because I would not burden your memories too much, I shall reduce it all to these three heads; what you are to do before, in, and after prayer, that it may be acceptable unto God, and profitable for yourselves; of which very briefly.

*First*, therefore, you must know that prayer is a duty of that extraordinary weight and moment, that it is not to be undertaken hand over head, without a due and solemn preparation of yourselves beforehand. If you were to speak but to an earthly prince, none of you but would consider beforehand what to speak, and how to carry yourselves before him: how much more when you go to the Universal Monarch of the World, the Supreme Governor and Possessor of Heaven and Earth, whose Glory and Majesty did you but rightly apprehend, I am confident never a one of you durst have the boldness to speak unto Him, without a serious consideration beforehand what to ask, and how to deport yourselves before Him; but you would take pains with yourselves to bring your hearts into a fit temper and disposition for so great a work, which that you may do, I desire you to observe only these three rules.

1. First, Lay aside all earthly and carnal thoughts, otherwise it will be impossible for you to perform so heavenly and spiritual a duty as this is; and therefore, so soon as ever you set yourselves about either public or private prayer, you must be sure to bid the world adieu, and not suffer your estates, your credit, your relations, nor any thing here below,

to molest or distract you in the performing of so solemn a duty as this is.

2. Secondly, Bethink yourselves beforehand what mercies you want, for which you should pray unto Him, and what you have, for which you must praise God, as also how unworthy you are, either to retain what you have, or to receive what you want. Consider how sinful you are by nature, and how sinful you have been by practice, so as to be vile and base in your own eyes, when you appear before so pure and glorious a Being as the Great God is ; otherwise you can neither acknowledge rightly your former sins, nor beg mercy and grace as you ought to do, nor indeed are you fully qualified for the receipt of any blessing whatsoever, no, nor for the asking of it.

3. Thirdly, Get your hearts possessed beforehand with a due sense of God's transcendent excellency, greatness, and glory. Consider with yourselves, that you are now going to speak to Him by Whom alone you speak ; that you are now to converse with the Universal Being of the whole world ; with Him that is the only fountain of all life and motion ; with Him Who with a word of His mouth commanded thee out of nothing, and with a frown of His countenance can send thee into Hell ; with Him that can do what He will, and will do what He can for them that truly serve Him : and let such considerations as these are fill your hearts with awful and reverential apprehensions of Him, and then you will be in a fit frame to appear before Him, and to put up your petitions to Him.

ii. Having thus prepared yourselves and brought your hearts into a fit temper, you may set upon the work itself, and present yourselves before the Eternal God, and your requests unto Him ; wherein I desire you to observe these few directions. As,

First ; All the while you are praying, still remember what you are doing, and carry yourselves accordingly, even with that lowliness and humility, that reverence and solemnity, as becometh poor sinful creatures, whilst you are praying to the great Creator of the World. Thus the Apostle tells you, that if you would serve " God acceptably," you must do it with " reverence and godly fear ;" and the reason is, because our

Heb. 12. 28,  
29.

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“God is a consuming fire.” And therefore let others sit as confidently, and speak as malapertly, as they please to the great God, they must answer for it another day: but if you desire to pray acceptably, you must do it with that inward awe and dread upon your spirits, and with all those outward expressions of reverence and godly fear, that may testify your acknowledgment of God’s infinite greatness and authority over you, and your own vileness and unworthiness before Him. Hence also,

Secondly; Be sure to observe the wise man’s counsel in Eccles. 5. 2. all your addresses to the Most High God: “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in Heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.” God is in Heaven, He is a great, an infinite, an eternal, an all-glorious and Isa. 66. 1. incomprehensible Being; Heaven is His throne and earth His footstool. Thou art a poor silly worm, a little creeping, crawling, sinful dust and ashes, and therefore have a care what thou sayest unto Him, and fear to speak any thing amiss before Him. As Abraham, when he had been importunate with God, for the saving of Sodom and Gomorrah from destruction; “Behold now,” saith he, “I have taken Gen. 18. 27, 32. upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes. Oh! let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once;” so careful should we be of what we speak to God, so fearful of speaking any thing mis-timely before Him; for if we do, instead of accepting or answering our prayers, He will be angry and displeased with us for them: and therefore, whatsoever liberty others take unto themselves, do you remember always the distance betwixt God and you, and keep within your bounds; be not hasty to utter any thing before so great a majesty as He is.

Thirdly; Have a great care to keep your thoughts and affections together all the while that you are performing your devotions. As your tongues should not, so neither should your hearts run before your heads, nor your affections before your apprehensions in prayer; but the whole man, both soul and body, should be jointly engaged in the performance of it, yea, and both the faculties of the soul too; the understanding with its apprehensions, and the will with

its affections. How zealous soever or affectionate you may seem in prayer, unless your zeal be governed and regulated by your understanding, unless there be light as well as heat, it is but a blind kind of devotion; and therefore we must be sure to follow the Apostle's rule, "I will pray with my spirit, and I will pray with my understanding also;" that is, we must keep our minds intent all the while upon the work we are doing, and our souls sensible of the greatness of that God we are praying to, the necessity of the mercies which we desire, our own unworthiness to receive them, and the like. By this means we shall perform "a reasonable service" unto God, and if it be not reasonable, I am sure it can be no acceptable service to Him. 1 Cor. 14.  
15.

Lastly; Pray in faith, desiring nothing but only in the Name of Christ, for so runs the promise, "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you." Indeed we have no other ground to expect any mercy at God's hands, but only upon the account of Christ; and therefore he that goes in his own name, or trusting in his own righteousness, may justly expect a curse rather than a blessing upon what he doth; so that if you would pray to purpose, you must be sure to keep your faith firm all the while, and steadfastly fixed upon Christ, apprehending and believing Him to be your Advocate in Heaven; presenting your prayers to the Divine Majesty, with the incense of His Own merit and Mediation; never expecting to be heard or accepted upon any other account, but only for Christ Jesus's sake, but humbly confiding, that for His sake the eternal God will pardon the sins which you confess before Him, grant the petitions which you present unto Him, and accept of that praise and thanksgiving which you offer Him. These, therefore, are the most material things which I look upon as necessary to the due performance of this duty, and which I would advise you to have an especial care of in every prayer you make, even that you always pray with reverence and godly fear; that you be not hasty to utter any thing before God; let thy thoughts and affections always go together, and thy faith be continually fixed upon Christ. Do but these things, and you need not fear but your prayers will be accepted and answered, so far as what you ask is truly good [Rom. 12.  
1.]  
John 16. 23.



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[Luke 18.  
13.]

for you: and therefore these are the things which I would have you principally observe in prayer, without troubling your heads about the unnecessary circumstances of it, as whether your prayer be long, or short, whether you read it, or say it without book; for such things as these are not at all of the essence of prayer. The humble publican certainly prayed as much in crying only, "God be merciful to me a sinner," as if he had prayed a whole hour together; for prayer doth not at all consist in a multitude of words, but in the attention of the mind, and the sincere desires of the soul. And whether you read or rehearse a prayer, whether you say it extempore or by premeditation, it is the same thing, if these the necessary qualifications do but concur in it. Though this I must say, and your own experience may teach the same, that it is far easier to pray the prayer which we know beforehand, than that which we do not know. For if I know not beforehand what to pray for next, I must either study myself what to say, or else hearken to what another will say next; and so the time which I should spend in raising my affections, and acting my faith in prayer, will be wholly taken up in studying or hearkening, and so there will be little or nothing of prayer in it. Whereas if I understand all along what I shall next pray for, I shall have nothing else to do but to pray, that is, to raise up my soul to God, and to order my affections suitably to the matter I am upon; as I should more fully demonstrate, but that your own experience, I suppose, will save me that labour.

iii. These things, therefore, being observed in the body of your prayers, the last thing to be considered, is what you must do after prayer, that it may be accepted and answered; for which you must know, First, that when you have done your prayers, you must not think that you have done with them, but when you have done praying, you are then to recollect yourselves, and consider what sins you have acknowledged, that so for the future you may avoid them, and what mercies you have begged, that so you may expect them. For it is certainly one of the most ridiculous customs imaginable, crept in, I know not how, amongst us, to put up several petitions to the Most High God, and never to regard whether He answer them or no: for this is the way surely

never to be answered indeed; for if we do not matter whether God answers us or no, we cannot expect He should. And then, secondly, you must not only consider what you have prayed for, but you must trust in Christ for the acceptance and answer of your prayers. And, verily, there is much more in this than people generally are aware of; for our Saviour Himself saith, "What things soever you desire, Mark 11.24. when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them;" and the Apostle intimates the same. And James 1.5,6. therefore the great work to be done after prayer, is firmly to believe that God, for Christ's sake, will accept of our sincere, though weak endeavours, as also that He will grant our requests, so far as they are really for His glory and our own good. And whosoever observes these several rules before, in, and after his praying, his prayers will doubtless go up "as a memorial before God."

These things, therefore, being duly considered, I suppose you will all grant prayer not to be so easy a duty as it is commonly thought to be. I confess, was there no more required to it, but to say, or read, or hear a company of words uttered by another, any one that could either read, or speak, or hear, might pray too: or if a large harangue of phrases and expressions heaped together was praying, any one that hath but a voluble tongue, and a good stock of confidence, impudence I mean, to speak what he pleaseth to the great God, might pray well enough; but seeing nothing less than the whole soul is to be employed about it, and it consists not in words and expressions, but in our minds and affections, so as to have them wholly taken up with Divine affairs, in the performance of this duty, we must needs acknowledge, that to us especially, who at the best are but sinful creatures, it is a hard and difficult work indeed. But howsoever hard it is, it is worth your while to learn and practise it, as you will all confess, if you will but seriously consider these following particulars.

1. First, that such solemn addresses to the Most High God, as I have been now describing, will in a little while strangely refine and enlarge your conceptions of Him, and so you will every day be more and more acquainted with Him, and in and through Christ ingratiate yourselves with

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Job 22. 21. Him, and by degrees be able to enjoy peace and happiness in Him, and inure yourselves to a full and perfect enjoyment of Him in another world. "Acquaint now thyself with Him and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee," said Eliphaz to Job. As we see by ourselves, who keeping a correspondence, and frequently conversing and discoursing together, by that means we come to be acquainted with one another. In like manner, by often praying and conversing with God in so serious a manner as this is, we shall soon become better acquainted with Him, and the thoughts of Him will not be so strange unto us as they were wont to be.

2. Secondly; this would also be an excellent means to keep our hearts in a continual awe and fear of Him, that we shall not dare to do any thing that we know will be offensive to Him; and it would inflame our hearts also with love and affection to Him, and with ardent desires after the full enjoyment of Him; for the oftener we pray thus unto Him, the better we shall be acquainted with Him, and, the better we are acquainted with Him, by so much we shall the more clearly discover His transcendent beauty and enamouring perfections, which will soon transport our souls into flames of love unto Him, and by consequence it will deaden our affections unto all things else, that we shall not lie doating any longer upon such poor and pitiful things as this world presents unto us: yea, by this means our conversations would be in Heaven, and we should participate in some measure with the glorified Saints and Angels in their celestial joys, and should begin that work in time, which we hope to continue for ever, even praising, adoring, and enjoying Him that made us: so that this is the way to have Heaven upon earth, and to have some foretastes of the grapes of Caanan, whilst we are in the wilderness of this world, before we get a full meal of them.

3. Thirdly; consider also, that prayer is the most powerful and effectual means in the world to prevent all evil, and to obtain whatsoever is truly good for us. By this your fears may be all dispelled, your doubts resolved, your dangers prevented, your wants supplied, your enjoyments blessed, and your souls adorned with all true grace and glory. For what is it that prayer hath not done? What blessing can it

not obtain ? It can dissolve the very flints into floods of water, as Moses's did. It can shut Heaven and open it again, as Elijah did. It can make the sun and moon stand still, as Joshua's did. It can raise the dead to life, as the Prophet Elisha's did. It can stop the mouths of lions, as Daniel's did. It can suspend the fury of the most raging flames, as the three children's did. It can make a fish to ship us safe to land in its own belly, as Jonah's did. It can obtain children, as Hannah's did. It can conciliate the favour of princes to us, as Nehemiah's did. If we lack wis- James 1. 5.  
dom, by prayer we may get it. If we be sick, by prayer we ch. 5. 15.  
may be recovered. If our sins be many and great, by prayer we may have them pardoned : "I said, I will confess my trans- Ps. 32. 5, 6.  
gressions to the Lord," said David, "and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin ; for this, shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be heard." If our lusts be strong and prevalent, by prayer we may have them weakened. If our graces be weak and infirm, by prayer 2 Cor. 12.  
we may have them strengthened. What shall I say ? There is 8, 9.  
no evil whatsoever which we either feel or fear, but by prayer it may be removed : no good whatsoever which we either want or desire, but by prayer it may be obtained. Yea, so powerful and prevalent is prayer, duly performed, with Almighty God Himself, that He cannot, at least He will not, deny us any thing that we sincerely pray for, having a promise from Him, "Ask and ye shall have." Inso- Matt. 7. 7.  
much, that when Israel had sinned in making and worshipping the molten calf, and God was ready to destroy them for it, Moses stepped in, and interceded for them, and prayed Him to divert His wrath from them ; whereupon God said unto him, "Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot Exod. 32.  
against them, and that I may consume them." "Let me 10.  
alone," a strange expression ! intimating as if He could not do it as long as Moses prayed so earnestly for the contrary ; as if He could not strike them so long as Moses prayed Him to hold ; as if prayer could tie the arms of Omnipotence Itself ; and yet this is no more than what our Saviour Him- Luke 18.  
self intimates in the parable of the unjust judge, who could 1-3.  
not but at length hearken to the petition of the importunate widow ; so great is the power and efficacy of devout prayer,



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for the obtaining of whatsoever good things we sincerely desire at the hands of Almighty God.

And shall I need now to use any more arguments to persuade you to the constant and sincere performance of this duty, which is no less effectual with God than it is acceptable unto Him? Or do you now think it possible to gain so much in an hour's time by your trades, or in your shops, as you may do by praying? Surely you cannot think it. And therefore I shall say no more, hoping that you all understand yourselves, and what you have heard, better, than to live any longer in the neglect of this duty: which if you do, the Papists will rise up in judgment against you; for they punctually observe each day their hours of prayer according to their manner of devotions. The Turks will rise up in judgment against you, for they constantly pray five times a-day, and besides their private devotions, they reckon them little better than Atheists, that are not once or twice a-week at least in their mosques, or temples. The Pagans will rise up in judgment against you; for, though they knew not the true God, they constantly prayed to such as they thought to be so. And, therefore, have a care of yourselves, and as you excel all these in knowledge, so be sure to excel them in practice too; and do not only pray oftener than heretofore, but endeavour to do it better too, both in public and private, observing the rules which I have now explained, that so "your prayers may go up as a memorial before God."

## SERMON CXLVI.

OF ALMSGIVING.

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ACTS x. 4.

*Thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up for a memorial  
before God.*

ALTHOUGH the Oracles of God were committed only to [Rom. 3. 2.] the Jews, yet by their means many of the Gentiles also came to the knowledge of the true God ; such especially as lived among or near the Jews, some of which embraced the whole Jewish religion with all its rites and ceremonies belonging to it ; of which sort were Uriah the Hittite, Herod the Idumæan, Onkelos the Chaldee Paraphrast, and several others. These being circumcised, were no longer called Gentiles, but Jews, though not by birth but by profession. Others there were who attained to the knowledge of the true God, the same which the Jews worshipped, so as to worship none but Him, and to observe the more weighty matters of the law, [Matt. 23. as justice, mercy, and the like ; of which sort there were 23.] many in all ages and countries too where the Jews lived, but being not circumcised, they were still reputed Gentiles and unclean, and therefore were not permitted to come within the sacred limits of the Temple, but they prayed only in the outward court ; where at the three great festivals, oxen and sheep used to be sold, which was therefore called, *Atrium gentium sive immundorum*, ‘ the court of the Gentiles or unclean persons : ’ which surrounded the second court where the Jews prayed, and was divided from it by a little low wall of stone, which as Josephus saith, was called γεισιος, that is, ‘ a [Bell. Jud. v. 5. cf. Ant. xii. 3. viii. 33.] fence,’ whereby the Jews were separated from the Gentiles.

Of these Gentile proselytes we have frequent mention in

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2, 5.

ver. 6-9.

the New Testament, but the most remarkable of them were two soldiers, both centurions, or captains of companies, both very eminent for their piety towards God, and their charity towards man. The one was in our Saviour's time at Capernaum, who expressed his piety and charity by building of a synagogue or place of prayer, which was a clear demonstration of his worshipping the true God, in that he dedicated a place on purpose for it, wherein himself and the devout Gentiles, as well as the Jews, might perform their devotions to Him that made them. For though the Gentiles might not pray among the Jews in the Cathedral, as I may so call it, even the Temple of Hierusalem, yet they might in private churches or synagogues, or else questionless they would never have built any, as we see this centurion did. And it is observable, that this man's piety and charity which he exercised to the best of the knowledge he had yet attained to, were the occasion of his being directed, yea, and commended too to Christ, and afterwards of his believing in Him. Yea, his faith was so eminent, that it was not only approved, but highly applauded, commended, and admired too by Christ Himself, as being greater than He had found among the Jews themselves. From whence give me leave to observe by the way, how well pleased the great God is to see us live up to the best of our knowledge, be it more or less; for here we see this centurion, born and bred a Gentile, yet attains to some knowledge of the true God, and serving Him as well as he could, God was so well pleased with him, that He directed him to the only way that leads to life, giving him faith in Christ; so that to this day, yea, and for ever, he is recorded for an eminent believer, having this infallible testimony from Christ Himself, "that He had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

Acts 10. 2.

The other centurion was Cornelius at Cæsarea, who in like manner with the former was a "devout man, one that feared God with all his house, that gave much alms to the people, and prayed unto God always." So that he is commended here by God as much as the other was by Christ, and received too the same gracious recompense of reward as the other did. It is true, Christ did not speak unto this in person, as He did to the other, because He was now

ascended ; but He sent an express to him by no less a person than an Angel from Heaven, to direct him how to attain to everlasting Salvation. The express which the Angel brought and delivered to him in a vision, was briefly this ; “ Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God ; and now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter.” So that the end of his coming was plainly to direct Cornelius to the faith of Christ. But then what need the Angel have mentioned his prayers and his alms ? Questionless it was only for this end, that we might all know how acceptable these duties are to Almighty God, Who took such special notice of them, as they were performed by Cornelius, that He gave it in commission to His angelical ambassador, to acquaint Cornelius, “ that his prayers and his alms were gone up as a memorial before God,” and that they were the occasion of this His unspeakable mercy to him, in shewing him the way to eternal life. For which he was likewise honoured so far, as to be the first Gentile that after our Saviour’s Ascension was converted to the Christian faith ; yea, so that by him the gate of Heaven was opened to all Gentiles as well as Jews. For which end, about the same time that Cornelius had a vision commanding ver. 9-12. him to send for Peter, Peter had a vision too, giving him commission to go to Cornelius. For hitherto it was not lawful for the Jews to converse with the Gentiles ; but Peter now was clearly admonished in a vision from God not to make any scruple of it, nor to account any man for the future unclean. For now the legal or typical sanctity was abolished, and God had cleansed or accounted all other nations and people as clean as the Jews ; all which is intimated in Peter’s vision.

Hence, therefore, by this the miraculous conversion of Cornelius to the Christian faith, the distinction between Jew and Gentile ceased. The Gentiles being now admitted into society or fellowship with the Jews, both equally are capable of the grace of Christ, and of the benefits of His death and passion, so that Christ hath now made Jew and Gentile both one, and hath “ broken down the middle wall of partition between Eph. 2. 14. them,” as the Apostle saith. In which words he doubtless alludes to the wall before spoken of, surrounding the second



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court of the Temple, whereby the Gentiles were parted, or separated from the Jews, in performing their devotions to Almighty God. This “middle wall of partition,” saith the Apostle, “is now broken down;” that is, the Gentiles now are esteemed as holy as the Jews, and partake of the same liberty and privileges as they do, there being no partition-wall now left to separate the one from the other.

Hence, therefore, we may observe what special notice God takes of our prayers and alms, in that Cornelius, a Gentile, performing these duties as well as he could, God was pleased in a wonderful manner to certify him that He still remembered all his good works, and was so gracious to him for them, as to direct him the way to everlasting life, yea, and to honour him so far as to make him the first Gentile convert to the Gospel of Christ, and that, too, in so miraculous a manner, that his conversion was the occasion of all other Gentiles, and by consequence of our admission likewise into the Church of Christ; insomuch that were there no other arguments to persuade us to the diligent practice of these duties, this, duly considered, would be enough to prevail upon any one that seriously minds his own eternal interest, to devote himself wholly to the sincere performance of them, to the utmost of his skill and power.

Which that I may be still farther assistant to you in, as I have endeavoured to explain unto you the true nature and notion of prayer, the reasons of its acceptableness unto God, the way how we may perform it acceptably to Him, and the manifold obligations that lie upon us to do so; so now I shall speak to the other duty here annexed to it, and that is alms; concerning which, the first thing that I would present to your consideration is the necessary connexion between these two duties; “Thy prayers and thine alms,” saith the Angel, “are come up for a memorial before God;” so that it seems they both went up to Heaven together. And it is not for any one, but for both of them, that Cornelius is here commended for a “devout man, one that feared God;” for indeed that can be no true piety towards God, that is not accompanied with charity towards our neighbour; “for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen?” The same we may say

of all other acts of piety whatsoever. No man can be truly said to fear, honour, obey, or trust in God, that is not also helpful, loving, and charitable to his brother. And as for the principal act of Divine worship, even prayer, it can neither be rightly performed by us, nor will it be accepted of by God, if it be severed from alms, or at least an inward disposition to distribute them. Hence our Saviour, in His Sermon upon the Mount, speaks of these two duties together, and shews how they ought to be performed without hypocrisy and guile. But why should our Saviour single these two duties out, to speak so particularly to them, and join them so together in His preaching, but to teach us that we are to join them together too in our practice, even that prayer and alms still go together, as St. Paul also enjoined; "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." 'Upon the first day of the week;' that is, upon the Lord's day, when they met together to pray, he would have them at that time too to give to the poor, or at least to lay something by for them. The like was expressly commanded under the Law, even that none should appear before the Lord empty, but every one should bring according to his ability, for pious and charitable uses. The same was constantly observed in the Primitive Church, both in the Apostles' times and after, that whensoever they met together to pray, they brought something along with them, to be employed in the service of God, and for the relief of the poor, as reckoning alms the best enforcement of prayer, and the way to obtain an answer of God; according to His Own promise by the Psalmist, "offer unto God thanksgiving," that is, in deeds as well as words, "and pay thy vows to the Most High; and call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." And how earnest or affectionate soever we may be in prayer to God, if we be not at the same time as charitably disposed to the poor, we may as good hold our tongues, for He hath told us how we shall speed. "When ye spread forth your hands," saith He, "I will hide Mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear;" but if ye be merciful and relieve the oppressed, and the like, then He will hear. And, verily, all things considered, I cannot imagine with

Matt. 6. 1,  
2, 5, 6.

1 Cor. 16.  
1, 2.

Exod. 23.  
15.  
Deut. 16. 16,  
17.

Ps. 50. 14,  
15.

Isa. 1. 15-  
18.

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what reason we can expect that God should hear us requesting temporal, spiritual, and eternal mercies from Him, if we at the same time deny our poor brother, desiring a little temporal relief only of us? and so at the same time, deny not only him, but God Himself, in Whose Name he begs it, and Who hath expressly enjoined us to do it. How can we expect that He should shew mercy unto us, when we will shew none to others for His sake? Or with what face can we presume to ask Him to pardon our sins against Him, when we at the same time will not pardon another's little injuries against us? Or desire him to relieve our souls, when we refuse to relieve another's body? Or, how can we imagine that He should hear us, when we refuse to hear Him, requesting only a little of what Himself hath given us, towards the feeding and clothing of such as He, by His Providence, hath made poor and naked? Surely in such a case, the cries of the poor will be more prevalent with God for a curse, than our prayers can be for a blessing upon us; whereas if we be charitable towards others, then we shall be fitly disposed to receive charity from Him. This will manifest our praises to be real, and render our prayers effectual; and though our single prayers may not prevail, yet when they are coupled and enforced with alms, as they ought to be, they cannot fail of a kind acceptance and gracious answer. Then we shall hear that in effect one day said to us, which was here to Cornelius, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."

The next thing I would have you to observe here, is, the acceptableness of alms to God; "Thy prayers and thine alms," saith the Angel, intimating that God takes special notice of and is pleased with our alms as well as prayers, with our giving to others as well as our asking from Him. Not thy prayers only, but thine alms, "are come up for a memorial before God," which that yours may for the future do, I shall endeavour to possess you with the right sense and notion of this duty, shewing you the nature of it, the manner of its performance, the reasons of its acceptableness to God, and the obligations that lie upon us, together with the encouragements which we all have to perform it.

First, therefore, as to the nature of this duty in general, it

consists in the supplying of others' necessities, of what kind soever they be, unto the utmost of our power, and so it is not to be restrained to any one or more particular acts, but it extends itself to every thing wherein we can be in any way helpful to one another; so that, in general, it compriseth under it our feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, redeeming the captive, visiting the sick, entertaining the stranger, relieving the oppressed, easing the afflicted, comforting the sorrowful, instructing the ignorant, informing the erroneous, assisting the weak, admonishing the wicked, supplying the indigent, resolving the doubtful, rescuing such as are falling into danger, being good and kind, helpful and liberal to all unto the utmost of our power; so as not to suffer any one to be in any real want of what is necessary for them if we can help it, but to be always ready to supply others' necessities out of our abundance: that is, out of such part of our estates as we have not any real need of ourselves; for if we have no more than what is absolutely necessary for ourselves, we are not bound to part with any of that for the relief of another's necessities, for then we should be obliged rather to perish ourselves than to see another perish, which is contrary to the natural instinct of self-preservation; but if we have any thing more than what ourselves have real need of, as I suppose all or most here present have, and another do really want it, then we are enjoined by the laws of God and nature, yea, by the eternal rules of justice and charity, to supply his wants out of that which thus aboundeth to us, it being supposed superfluous as to us, but necessary unto him: and this is the proper meaning and purport of these words of John Baptist, "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat let him do likewise." Luke 3. 11. That is, he that hath more than himself doth really want, must impart it to him that really wants it, or at least is supposed to do so. Neither must we think this to be an arbitrary thing, left to our own choice, whether we will or will not do it; no, mistake not yourselves, you are as much bound to give alms in this sense, so as to supply others' necessities if you be able, as you are to love and fear God, to honour and obey your parents, and the like: for the same law that commands the one, commands the other too. And



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1 Tim. 6.  
17, 18.

therefore St. Paul orders Timothy not to entreat, but to charge them that are rich in this world to do it. Charge them by their allegiance to God, by their love to Christ, and obedience to His Gospel, as they will answer it another day, that they give what they are able to the relief of others.

II. And lest you should think this an unreasonable thing, that you should be thus bound to give away any part of your estates to others, I shall endeavour to shew you the reasonableness of it, why God requires it of you, and by consequence also, why it is so acceptable to Him.

1. First, therefore, we must know that God, as He is the Maker and Preserver, so is He the Owner too and Possessor of all things in the world; so that it is not possible for us to have any thing but what we receive from Him. Hence, therefore, He requires alms of us, only as a testimony of our acknowledgment, that it is from Him alone that we receive whatsoever we have. He is your Landlord, you His tenants; it is under and by Him that you hold your estates: and to testify your acknowledgment of His title to, and propriety in, what you enjoy, and that the reversion is still in Him, and He may dispose of it as Himself sees good; for this end, I say, He requires you to pay Him a constant rent, homage, or tribute, of what you have, to be employed in His immediate service, or else for the relief of His meaner and poorer servants, which He for this purpose hath told you shall always be amongst you, that you may always know where to pay your acknowledgment to Him; and whosoever neglects or refuses to pay this easy duty imposed upon him, he thereby forfeits his right to the use of what he hath, and it ceaseth to be good for him:

[Matt. 26.  
11.]

1 Tim. 4. 4.

“For every creature of God is then only good to us, if it be received with thanksgiving;” which thanksgiving is not only to be expressed by words, but deeds. Neither can we any way manifest our real thanks for what we possess by His favour and blessing, but only by employing it according to His command, and imparting it for His sake to such as are poor and needy. Hence, under the Law, when the people brought their offering to the Lord, for the maintenance of the Priest and Levites, and for the relief of strangers, orphans, and widows, they were enjoined at the

same time to make their public acknowledgment of God's dominion over what they had, and of His mercy in bestowing it upon them. Yea, they were to acknowledge their tribute of thanksgiving to God to be an hallowed and sacred thing. The same acknowledgment did David make, when himself and all Israel contributed so freely and liberally towards the building of the Temple. And thus, whensoever you give any thing to the poor, as you ought to do, you do but your duty in acknowledging of God's propriety in what He hath committed to you; and all the reason in the world, that you, who have nothing but what you receive from Him, should perform the homage, and pay the rent, which He hath reserved for Himself and the poor, and of what He hath intrusted with you.

2. Secondly: He hath imposed this duty upon you, to make you always mindful of your dependence upon Him, and your obligations to Him, for what you do enjoy. A confluence of earthly enjoyments is very apt to make us forget God; it puffs men up with pride, and makes them have high and overweening conceits of themselves, and so to forget Him that is the Maker and Giver of all things; "According to their pasture," saith God by the Prophets, "so were they filled: they were filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me." Thus Jeshurun is said to have waxen fat, and then to have kicked, and been unmindful of his Maker. This God foresaw, and therefore gave them a caution against it. Hence Agur feared riches, and prayed against them upon this account; "Give me," saith he, "neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord?" For so they who abound in the things of this world are too apt to speak, though not with their mouths, yet in their hearts, and say, "Who is the Lord?" as if it was below them to regard or mind Him. But now a constant and liberal distribution of what we have to the relief of the poor for God's sake, and in obedience to His commands, this will make us always mindful of our head-Landlord, and to lift our hearts to Heaven, to remember and think of Him that "gives us all things richly to enjoy." They that refuse to perform this duty imposed

*Deut.* 26. 1,  
2, 10.

*ver.* 12, 13.

*1 Chron.* 29.  
11, 12, 14.

*Hos.* 13. 6.

*Deut.* 32.  
15-18.

*ch.* 6. 10-12.  
*ch.* 8. 11-14.

*Prov.* 30. 8,  
9.

[*1 Tim.* 6.  
17.]

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upon them, do in effect deny God to be the Giver and Owner of what they have ; and therefore cannot but soon forget Him. But to be always doing good upon earth, is the way to keep your hearts in Heaven, and make you mindful of God, and of His mercy and favour to you ; as our Saviour also intimates unto us, where, speaking of alms, He saith, “ Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth, but in Heaven ; ” “ for,” saith He, “ where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also ; ” signifying, that without the performance of this duty, our hearts can never be, as they ought, in Heaven.

Matt. 6. 19-  
21.

3. Lastly, God requires this duty of you, and there is all the reason in the world you should perform it, because this is the means whereby God hath provided for such persons as, for reasons best known to Himself, He hath been pleased to make destitute of any other maintenance ; for as God intended all along that there should be poor among us, so He still designed they should be maintained this way, even out of the charitable contributions of others, to which, for this end too, He hath given more than themselves have absolute necessity of. So that if you be able, and yet deny to relieve any one in want, you rob him of the maintenance which God hath provided, and put into your hands for him : for why should God give you more than you have real need of, but only that you might distribute it amongst such as do really need it ? And therefore mistake not yourselves ; what is necessary for the maintenance of yourselves and families is your own ; but what you have over and above, as I believe there are but few here present but have something, that is only deposited in your hands for the use of the poor. He that might and could have made them yours, hath made you their stewards, putting their maintenance into your hands ; and therefore have a care of embezzling of it, as also of denying it to them whose due it is ; for if you do, you will not only rob the poor, but God too, as Himself hath told you ; tithes being for the maintenance of His Ministers, and offerings for the relief of the poor. So that if ye would, as ye ought, pay every one their own, you must not withhold relief from the poor, whose debtors you all are.

Mal. 3. 8.

Prov. 3. 27.

Seeing, therefore, God hath been pleased so strictly to

require this duty of us, and there being so much reason that we should perform it, the performance of it cannot but be very grateful and acceptable unto God. As, on the other side, the neglect or omission of it cannot but be very displeasing and ungrateful unto Him; insomuch, that whatsoever we do unto the poor, God interprets it as done unto Himself; if we despise or neglect them, He looks upon Himself as despised and neglected by us; if we respect and relieve them, He reckons upon it as much as if we respected or relieved Him. And so we shall find at the day of judgment, as our Saviour Himself tells us; “Inasmuch as Matt. 25. 40. ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me;” and so on the contrary. Hence ver. 45. the Wise Man saith, “He that oppresseth the poor re- Prov. 14. 31. proaches his Maker; but he that honoureth Him hath mercy on the poor.” This is the reason that prayers and alms should always go together, because both have respect to God, and are both alike acceptable to Him, if duly performed; as we see here Cornelius’s were, the Angel himself being witness, that his “alms as well as prayers” went up “for a memorial before God.” But as every thing which goes under the name of prayer is not truly so, nor by consequence acceptable unto God, so neither must we think that every little alms we give unto the poor will be approved of and accepted by Him, unless it be done in the manner which He hath prescribed us; for as there is a great art in praying aright, so is there in giving too: but the whole mystery of it, I think, may be reduced to these following rules.

1. First; whatsoever you give unto the poor, you must give it purely out of obedience to God, and for His sake that first gave it unto you. It is not enough that you give a little now and then to them that want it; that you may do and yet not perform this duty; for all alms, though they be given immediately to the poor, they ought to have respect to God, which notwithstanding they cannot have, unless he that gives them does it out of a sense of his duty and obligations to God, and from a principle of sincere obedience to His commands: this being one great reason, as I have shewn, why God requires alms of us, that we may thereby



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testify our acknowledgment of His power and dominion over us, and of His right unto and propriety in what we have received from Him. But whatsoever it is we give, if we have not respect to God in the giving of it, we make no acknowledgment of Him in it, and so it faileth to be such alms as He hath required of us. Whereas, on the other side, be it never so little that we give, if we have respect to God and Christ in the giving of it, God will both accept of it, and reward us for it, as our Saviour Himself

Mark 9. 41. assures us, saying, "For whosoever shall give you a cup of cold water to drink in My Name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."

2. Hence, in the second place, alms, properly so called, must be universal, and not confined either as to object or time; you must not give them only to such as are of your own humour and disposition, or of your own sect and opinion, not only to such as you have been formerly, or may hereafter be obliged to; not only to them of your own kindred, neighbourhood, or acquaintance; not only to such as you have a particular affection for, or relation to; for if you give only to such, it is not in obedience to God's command, but upon the account of these or the like circumstances which the persons you give to lie under, that you are so charitable to them. And, therefore, if you would give alms indeed, you must do it indifferently to all, or to any which you know or think to be in want, without respecting any thing else but God's command. Neither is this a duty to be performed only now and then when you are in a good humour, or when the doleful complaints of indigent persons make strong impressions upon you, and so move you to pity and compassion towards them; or when the practice of others, in whose company you are, shames you into a compliance with them in giving; or when you have an opportunity to promote some design, or get some credit to yourselves by it. He that gives only upon such occasions as these are, never rightly gives at all; for it is plain that it is the occasion only that moves him to it, without any respect to God's commands: so that he that would perform this duty as he ought, must be constant and uniform in the practice of it, as being still induced to it, only upon this

account, because it is God's will and pleasure he should do it.

3. Hence also, in the next place, you must not give your alms with any reluctancy and unwillingness, as if you were angry that God hath imposed it upon you, but you must do it with a "cheerful heart, and a willing mind." "Every man," saith the Apostle, "according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver." "He that sheweth mercy with cheerfulness." And verily, when you give an alms to the poor, you have more cause to rejoice that gave it, than they have that receive it, it being "more blessed to give than to receive." For what a mercy is it, that God hath not only provided you necessities for yourselves, but hath enabled you also to supply others; wherein there is a double mercy, for which you can never be sufficiently thankful, in that you have not only wherewithal to give, but have hearts also to give it, which you are to look upon as two distinct blessings, and such as very seldom go together; for many would give if they had it, and many have it but will not give; and therefore, if you have both estates and hearts also to give, you have infinitely more cause to rejoice in giving, than they have to whom you give it. And this you may be sure God takes special notice of, in every act of charity you do perform, still observing whether you give with your hearts as well as hands; which if you do not, He will not reckon it as any act of charity at all. Hence likewise, if you would give alms to purpose, you must not put off the giving of them till you die, as many are wont to do, never giving any thing to others, until they can keep nothing themselves: for although you may then give something in your last will and testament to the poor, thanks will not properly be due to you for that, but to your mortality: for should you never go out of the world, you would never give any thing to the poor that are in it. And therefore do not give less now, because you intend to give more when you die. Remember it was the alms which Cornelius gave while living, not those he gave upon his death-bed, "that went up for a memorial before God."

Deut. 15. 10.  
2 Cor. 9. 7.

Rom. 12. 8.

Acts 20. 35.

4. Fourthly; You must not content yourselves with giving

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Deut. 16.

10.

1 Cor. 16.2,

2 Cor. 9. 6.

Luke 21. 1  
-3.

Luke, 11.  
41.

Matt. 6. 1.

a little out of that great abundance which God hath bestowed upon you, in comparison of what many others have, but you must be sure to give to others proportionably to what God hath given unto you, every one according as God hath prospered him. For the more or less He hath given unto you, the more or less He requires from you. You cannot give more than you have, neither are ye bound to give away all you have, but every one is obliged to give according to his estate, be it more or less ; and as the Apostle tells you, “ He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly ; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.” And it is observable that our Saviour seeing the rich men cast in much money into the treasury for their offerings, and a poor widow cast in but two mites, He said, that she had “ cast in more than they all ;” because they of their abundance had cast in but a little in comparison of what they had, but she had cast in all her livelihood, that is, all that she could possibly spare from her own necessary maintenance, or perhaps all she had in the world at that time ; giving us to understand, that how little soever a man gives, if it is but as much as he is able, it shall be accepted, when theirs shall not who give much more, but not proportionably to what they have. And therefore, in your practice of this duty, be sure to observe this rule, even always to proportion your charity to your estates, otherwise God may justly proportion your estates to your charity ; and you that will not give as much as you are able, shall be able to give no more than you do.

5. The last thing that I would commend to your observation, in every distribution of your alms, is, that you would be sure to have a care not to do it out of any such low and pitiful design, as to procure credit and applause from men, nor yet to think to merit any thing by what you do from God, but to depend only upon Jesus Christ for His acceptance of it. Do not prostitute so high and noble an act as this is to such a mean and base design as vainglory is. This your Saviour Himself hath forewarned you of. I add farther, be not so simple and ridiculous as to fancy that you can merit grace or glory from God by giving a little money to the poor. Such gross conceits will corrupt your best works, and make your charity itself as bad as simony ;

for as Simon Magus proffered money for the gift of the Holy Ghost, so you would give money for Heaven and eternal glory. It is true, if you give alms aright, God will reward you for it, but not out of debt but mercy ; not as if you could deserve any thing from Him, but only because He will be gracious to you for Christ's sake. And therefore, when you have given and done all you can, you are still to observe your Saviour's rule, "to account yourselves but unprofitable servants," so as to depend upon His Merit and Mediation only for the acceptance of what you do, humbly confiding that God, for His sake, will be well pleased with it. For which end likewise, every time you give an alms, I would advise you also to act your faith on Christ for its acceptance, lifting up your hearts to God at the same time, and saying within yourselves, "Lord, accept of this my acknowledgment of Thy undeserved goodness to me, for Christ Jesus' sake." [Act. 8. 18.] [Luke, 17. 10.]

Now how much, or how little soever you give unto the poor, if all these, the necessary qualifications of real charity concur in it, that is, if you give only in obedience to God, or for the sake of Christ ; if you give impartially to all sorts of objects, and constantly at all times, without respect to persons or seasons, if you give with a cheerful heart and a ready mind ; if you give proportionably to what you have as much as you are able ; and when you have done all, believe in Jesus Christ only for the acceptance of what you have done ; do this, and you will do "a work very acceptable unto God," and that which will go up "for a memorial before Him ;" so that as He remembers your prayers, so as to hear and answer them, so will He remember your good works, your alms too, so as to reward you for them out of His Own free grace and mercy. Hence, when Nehemiah had expressed his charity in so plentiful a manner to the house and people of God, he said, "Remember me, oh my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Thy mercy ;" not for the greatness of my charity to others, but "for the greatness of Thy mercy unto me." And thus we see how God, of His infinite mercy, remembered the alms as well as the prayers of Cornelius, so as to send an Angel to acquaint him with it, "Thy prayers and



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Luke 16. 9.

thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." And verily were there no other, this, one would think, is encouragement enough for any sober and considerate person to set immediately upon this work, upon charity, "the queen of graces," as the Fathers used to call it; for what greater blessing can you desire in the world, than to have the Supreme Governor of it well pleased with what you do, as He will most certainly be, if ye will but give alms as ye ought to do? This is the way wherein you may follow your Saviour's counsel, "in making you friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." For if you be constant and sincere in the distribution of your alms to the poor and needy, the greatest persons in the world will become your friends; God the Father will be your friend to pardon and protect you; God the Son will be your friend to mediate and intercede for you; God the Holy Ghost will be your friend too, to comfort and assist you; yea, and all that are truly pious, which are the most noble persons in the world, will respect and honour you. But though this be the greatest encouragement imaginable to the performance of this duty, yet fearing many of you may not think it so, I shall back and enforce it with some others. And, indeed, which way soever we turn our eye, it will present us with such considerations moving and engaging us to bounty and charity, that he deserves not the name of a Christian, nor scarce of a man, that refuses or neglects the practice of it. If we look above us, there we may see the eternal God expressly requiring and commanding it from us, as an acknowledgment of His dominion over us, and our subjection unto Him. If we look beneath us, there is a poor brother endowed with the same nature, adorned with the same faculties, capable of the same privileges and happiness with ourselves, yea, every way equal to us, only he wants a little such trash as the world calls riches; and shall we deny him so inconsiderable a thing, when his wants and necessities require it of us? If we look upon ourselves, we are beggars as well as he, and live upon alms as he doth. Our frail and mean condition, as well as God's command, requires us to pray always and beg for our daily food; and shall we think much to extend our mercy unto others,

who stand in so much need of mercy and relief ourselves? And if we look about us, upon the temporal enjoyments which God hath conferred upon us, they also supply us with convincing arguments of the necessity, usefulness, and excellency of this duty. But this being the argument, which, if duly considered and understood, will make the most vehement impressions upon you, I shall explain it a little further to you; for which end I desire you to consider, that as there is none of you but have more or less of the good things here below, if I may call them so, so there is none of you, I suppose, but would willingly employ, preserve, and make a good improvement of what you have. But that you can never do, but only by the constant exercise of this duty, this being the only way that riches are capable of being rightly used, preserved, or increased.

1. First; as to the proper use and employment which riches can be put to, it is certain there neither is nor can be any other but this: riches are properly *χρήματα*, ‘things to be used;’ neither are they any further riches than as they are some way or other useful for us. Whatsoever it is wherein you fancy yourselves rich, if you make no use of it, you are never the better nor richer for it. Silver and gold, if hoarded up, is no more to you than when it lay in the mine; for it is all one whether you have it not at all, or to no purpose. You may imagine yourselves to be rich, and others, as wise as yourselves, may repute you to be so; but you may as well think yourselves or be thought by others, to be good, as to be rich, for the having of such things which ye never use and so dispossess yourselves of them. Neither is it possible for you to enjoy, or employ what you have, any other way but by imparting what yourselves have not absolute necessity of, towards the relief and support of others. For, setting aside what is necessary for the maintenance of yourselves and families, all the rest, if not employed this way, will either turn to no account, or else to a bad one. You must either make no use of it at all, or else abuse it by throwing it away upon your lust and luxury, pride, ambition, or the like; by which means it will prove mischievous, prejudicial, and destructive to you. Whereas if you disperse it among the poor, you

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will then put it to the proper use which it was at first designed for, and for which God intrusted it with you ; for with part of it you supply your own, and with the rest you will relieve others' necessities, and so the whole will become useful either to yourselves or others.

2. This also, in the next place, is the only way to preserve as well as to employ your estates, a thing which I am confident you all desire ; for, having taken perhaps a great deal of pains to get an estate, you would keep it as long as you can, and, if possible, never be deprived of the use and comfort of it. But assure yourselves there is no such way of preserving what you have gotten to yourselves, as by imparting it to others. For you have no security at all for it, so long as you have it in your own possession, but are in continual danger of being robbed or cheated of it, or of losing it some way or other. There are a thousand ways whereby God can take it from you in a moment, and indeed you tempt Him to do so, by refusing to pay that tax or tribute, which He hath imposed upon you for it. So that there is no way imaginable to ensure what you have got, but by a free and liberal distribution of it to the use of the poor ; for by this means you will lodge it in the hands of Omnipotence itself, a place, where no deceit, no guile, no rapine, no moth, no corruption, no misfortune whatsoever can come near to it, as your Saviour himself hath signified to you ; and the reason is, because " he that hath pity on the poor lendeth unto the Lord ; and that which he hath given, will He pay him again." So that what you have is only God's in your hands, but what you give, is your own in His hands. What you have, God hath lent to you to lay out for Him ; but what you give, you lend to God to lay up for you ; and you have His Own infallible word for it, that He will be faithful to you, and pay it you again. And how is it possible then that you should have any security for your money comparable to this of transmitting it by the poor into the Bank of Heaven, where you will certainly find it another day, with infinitely more interest and increase than here you can desire or imagine ?

And this is the last thing I would have you to consider ; that this is the only way of increasing your estates ; for,

Matt. 6. 19,  
20.  
Prov. 19.  
17.

returning it by alms into God's hands, you will not only have a sure pay-master, but one that will return it again to you with extraordinary use and interest for it. An hundred for one is the common rate He gives at present, but ten thousand times ten thousand, yea, infinitely more in the life to come, as Himself assures you. So that nothing less than eternal life will be freely given to you, if you do but freely give towards the temporal livelihood of others. Which that you might be the better persuaded to do, Christ hath told you beforehand, how He will proceed at the great day, when your actions must be all strictly scanned and your lives reviewed; assuring you, that He will inquire principally into your performance of this duty, and accordingly pass His final sentence upon you, advancing the kind and liberal to eternal happiness, but condemning the covetous and unmerciful to everlasting torments. And the reason of this His preferring mercy at that day before all other graces or virtues, is, because all that we can expect at that day, is merely of His mercy and bounty; which they are altogether unworthy of, and unfit for, who would shew no mercy unto others, "for he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy." Consider these things, and then tell me, whether it be not your wisdom and interest, as well as duty, to follow Cornelius's example, in giving much alms to the poor. And do you go and do likewise, otherwise I assure you all your profession of religion will avail you nothing, there is nothing of true religion in it. Away, therefore, with those lip-services, and outward shows of piety, which cost you nothing! If you would manifest yourselves to be religious in good earnest, to be Christians indeed, let your hearts be always enlarged towards God, begging mercy to yourselves, with your hands continually opened to the poor, shewing mercy unto them. Let prayer be your daily exercise, and alms your constant recreation, solacing yourselves in refreshing and relieving others. This is to be religious to good purpose, and that you will find another day; for when all your other works shall be forgotten, and your labours lost, these will be upon the file in Heaven, where you will find to your endless comfort, that your prayers and your alms are kept as "a memorial before God."

Matt. 19.  
29.

Matt. 25.  
34-46.

Ja. 2. 13.

Ja. 1. 27.





FOUR SERMONS

PREACHED ON

PARTICULAR OCCASIONS,

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR IN HIS LIFETIME.



## SERMON I.

THE EXCELLENCY AND USEFULNESS OF THE COMMON PRAYER.

Preached at the opening of the Parish Church of St. Peter's, Cornhill,  
the 27th of November, 1681.

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I COR. xiv. 26.

*Let all things be done unto edifying.*

WHEN Judas Maccabeus had new-built the altar, and <sup>1 Mac. 4. 59.</sup> repaired the temple at Jerusalem, after it had been polluted and laid waste for three years together; the Church of God at that time and place rejoiced so much at it, that they kept the dedication of it eight days, and ordered that the same should be observed every year. And so we find it was in <sup>John 10. 22.</sup> our Saviour's time; for He Himself was pleased to honour that festival, though only of Ecclesiastical institution, with His Own presence. In the like manner, we of this parish have cause to be transported with joy and gladness, and to spend this day in praising and adoring the Most High God, for that our Church, which hath lain waste for above five times three years, is now at last rebuilt and fitted again, for His worship and service. For, what the altar and temple were unto the Jews then, the same will our Church be unto us now. Did they there offer up their sacrifices unto God, as types of the death of Christ? We shall here commemorate the said death of Christ, typified by those sacrifices. Did they come from all parts of Judea to worship God there? So shall we, I hope, come from all parts of this parish, to worship God here. Was the temple an house of prayer to them? So is this Church to us. Was that the



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place, where God, according to His promise, came unto His people to bless them? I do not doubt but He will do the same to us in this place, if we come unto it, and carry ourselves in it, as we ought to do. In short, was the temple the place where all things were performed that could any way conduce to the edifying of God's people, as things then stood? The same may be said of our Church, as things now stand. For whatsoever is, or can be, necessary to the edifying of our souls here, and so to their eternal Salvation hereafter, is clearly and fully comprehended in those several offices, which, according to the laws of the land, are now to be performed in this place. Neither is there any thing contained in any of them, but what doth really conduce to these great ends and purposes.

But this being a thing which is denied by some, and understood but by few amongst us, I shall endeavour to explain and demonstrate it unto all; which I choose to do at this time, because it is the most proper subject I could think of for this occasion. For unless what is to be now done in this place will answer the ends for which it is erected, all the costs and charges that have been laid out upon it, will be to no purpose at all: but if it can be fully made out, that the service which is here to be performed, doth highly conduce to the advancement of God's glory and your happiness, the great end wherefore such places are erected; then you cannot but acknowledge, that whatsoever any of you have contributed towards it, is the best money that ever you spent; and that this day, wherein the said service is begun to be performed in it, is one of the most joyful days that this parish ever saw.

This, therefore, is that which I shall endeavour to prove at this time and for that end I have chosen these words, for the ground and foundation of all that I shall say upon this subject, "Let all things be done to edifying." For the right understanding whereof, we must know, that the Apostle having in this chapter discoursed at large concerning the way and manner of holding Christian assemblies, and having proved, that whatsoever is there said ought to be spoken in such a language, that all there present may understand, and so be edified by it; he at last sums up the

whole in this proposition, "How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying." As if he should have said, Whatsoever gifts any of you have, or pretend to, yet when you meet together upon a religious account, for the public worship of God, take special care that all things be there done to the edifying of all who are present. From whence it is plain, that the Apostle lays down this as a general rule, necessary to be observed in all Christian congregations: so that whensoever we meet together to worship and serve God, if any thing be there done which is not for our edification, we come short of this rule; and so we do, too, if any thing be there wanting that may conduce to that end: for, according to this rule, as nothing is to be there done but what is for our edifying, so also, on the other side, all things that are or can be for our edifying, ought to be there done.

But for our better understanding the true sense and purport of this rule, it is necessary to consider what the Apostle here means by "edifying." For which we must know, that all Christians being, as the same Apostle saith, "of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone;" hence whatsoever tends to the strengthening, supporting, cementing, or raising this fabric higher, whatsoever it is whereby men are made more firm and solid Christians, more holy and perfect men than they were before, by that they are said to be "edified." And, therefore, it is a great mistake for men to think, as many do, that they are "edified" by what they hear, merely because they know perhaps some little thing which before they were ignorant of: for "knowledge," as the Apostle saith, "puffeth up," it is Eph. 2. 19, 20. "charity that edifieth." And, therefore, whatsoever knowledge we attain to, we cannot be said to be "edified" by it, any farther than as it influences our minds, excites our love, and inclines our hearts to God and goodness. And that this is the true notion of "edifying," is plain from the Apostle's own words, where he saith, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is Eph. 4. 29.

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good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." For from hence it is manifest, that that only is properly said to "edify," that ministers grace unto us; whereby we are made more pure and holy than we were before: and, therefore, we read of "edifying ourselves in love," and "building up ourselves on our most holy faith," which are the two graces that make up a real and true Christian; and nothing can be said to "edify," but what tends to the exciting and increasing of them: "Until we come," as the Apostle saith, "in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Hence, therefore, when the Apostle saith, "Let all things be done to edifying," his meaning, in brief, is this, that in all our Christian assemblies, when we meet together to worship and serve God, all things there are to be so done, that we may return home wiser and better than we came thither; with our knowledge of God and Christ increased, our desires enlarged, our love enflamed, our faith confirmed, all our graces quickened, and so our whole souls made more humble, more holy, more like to God than they were before.

The words being thus briefly explained, I shall now apply them to our present purpose, and shew that that form of religious worship, which is prescribed by our Church, established by the laws of the land, and therefore to be used now in this place, agrees exactly with this rule, or canon of the holy Apostle; even that "all things in it are done to edifying."

But before we prove that that form in particular, which our Church hath prescribed, is agreeable to this Apostolical rule, it is necessary to prove, first, that the prescribing a form in general is so: for unless the prescribing a form in general be according to this rule, no form in particular, that is prescribed, can possibly agree with it. But now, that this rule admits, yea, requires the prescribing of some form, is evident from the rule itself; for the Apostle here commands the Church of Corinth, and so all provincial Churches, to take care that in their religious assemblies "all things be done to edifying." But how is it possible for any provincial Church to see that this be done, except she prescribes some

certain form for the doing of it? If every minister of a parish should be left to his own liberty to do what he pleaseth in his own congregation, although some, perhaps, might be so prudent as to observe this rule as well as they could, yet, considering the corruption of human nature, we have much cause to fear that others would not; at least, the Church could be no way secured that all would, and, therefore, must needs be obliged to consider of, and appoint some such form to be used in all her congregations, by which she may be fully assured that this Apostolical rule is every where observed, as it ought to be. And although we should suppose, what can never be expected, that all the clergy in every province should be as wise and as good as they ought to be, yet it cannot be supposed that every one of them should understand what is for the edification of the people, as well as all together. And, therefore, it must needs be acknowledged, that the surest way to have this rule observed is, for the governors of every Church, and the whole clergy, to meet together by their representatives in a synod or convocation; and there, upon mature deliberation, agree upon some such form, which they, in their prudence and consciences, judge to be according to this rule, which the Apostle here lays down before them.

And, besides that the prescribing a form in general is more for our edifying, than to leave every one to do what seems good in his own eyes, we have the concurrent testimony, experience, and practice of the universal Church; for we never read or heard of any Church in the world, from the Apostles' days to ours, but what took this course. Though all have not used the same, yet no Church but have used some form or other. And, therefore, for any man to say, that it is not lawful, or not expedient, or not to edifying, to use a form of prayer in the public worship of God, is to contradict the general sense of Christianity, to condemn the Holy Catholic Church, and to make himself wiser than all Christians that ever were before him; which, whatsoever it may be thought now, was always heretofore reckoned one of the greatest sins and follies that a man could be guilty of.

Nay, more than all this too; for this is not only to make a man's self wiser than all Christians, but wiser than Christ



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Luke 11. 2.

Himself; for it is impossible to prescribe any form of prayer in more plain and express terms than He hath done it, where He saith, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven," &c. And I hope none here present but will acknowledge, that Christ, by Whom alone we can be edified, knows better what is, or what is not for our edification, than we, or all the men in the world, can do. And therefore, seeing He hath not only prescribed a form of prayer for His Disciples to use, but hath expressly commanded them to use it, we, who profess ourselves to be His Disciples, ought to rest fully satisfied in our minds, that using of a form of prayer is not only lawful, but much more for our edifying, than it is possible for any other way of praying to be.

The same may be proved also from the nature of the thing itself, by such arguments which do not only demonstrate that it is so, but likewise shew how it comes to be so. For, first, in order to our being edified, so as to be made better and holier, whensoever we meet together upon a religious account, it is necessary that the same good and holy things be always inculcated and pressed upon us, after one and the same manner. For we cannot but all find by our own experience, how difficult it is to fasten any thing that is truly good, either upon ourselves or others; and that it is rarely, if ever effected, without frequent repetitions of it. Whatsoever good things we hear only once, or now and then, though, perhaps, upon the hearing of them, they may swim for a while in our brains, yet they seldom sink down into our hearts, so as to move and sway the affections, as it is necessary they should do, in order to our being edified by them. Whereas, by a set form of public devotions rightly composed, as we are continually put in mind of all things necessary for us to know or do, so that is always done by the same words and expressions, which, by their constant use, will imprint the things themselves so firmly in our minds, that it will be no easy matter to obliterate or rase them out; but, do what we can, they will still occur upon all occasions; which cannot but be very much for our Christian edification.

Moreover, that which conduceth to the quickening our souls, and to the raising up our affections in our public devo-

tions, must needs be acknowledged to conduce much to our edification: but it is plain, that as to such purposes, a set form of prayer is an extraordinary help to us; for if I hear another pray, and know not beforehand what he will say, I must first listen to what he will say next; then I am to consider, whether what he saith be agreeable to sound doctrine, and whether it be proper and lawful for me to join with him in the petitions he puts up to God Almighty; and if I think it is so, then I am to do it: but before I can well do that, he is got to another thing; by which means it is very difficult, if not morally impossible, to join with him in every thing so regularly as I ought to do. But by a set form of prayer all this trouble is prevented; for having the form continually in my mind, being thoroughly acquainted with it, fully approving of every thing in it, and always knowing beforehand what will come next, I have nothing else to do, whilst the words are sounding in mine ears, but to move my heart and affections suitably to them, to raise up my desires of those good things which are prayed for, to fix my mind wholly upon God, whilst I am praising of Him, and so to employ, quicken, and lift up my whole soul in performing my devotions to Him. No man that hath been accustomed to a set form for any considerable time, but may easily find this to be true by his own experience; and by consequence, that this way of praying is a greater help to us than they can imagine that never made trial of it.

To this may be also added, that if we hear another praying a prayer of his own private composition or voluntary effusion, our minds are wholly bound up and confined to his words and expressions, and to his requests and petitions, be they what they will: so that, at the best, we can but pray his prayer. Whereas, when we pray by a form prescribed by the Church, we pray the prayers of the whole Church we live in, which are common to the minister and people, to ourselves, and to all the members of the same Church: so that we have all the devout and pious souls that are in it, concurring and joining with us in them; which cannot, surely, but be more effectual for the edifying, not only of ourselves in particular, but of the Church in general, than any private prayer can be.

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Lastly; in order to our being edified by our public devotions, as it is necessary that we know beforehand what we are to pray for, so it is necessary, that we afterwards know what we have prayed for, when we have done: for I suppose you will all grant, that all the good and benefit we can receive from our prayers is to be ultimately resolved into God's gracious hearing and answering of them; without which, they will all come to nothing. But there are two things required to the obtaining an answer of our prayers; first, that we sincerely and earnestly desire good things at the hands of God; to which, as I have shewn, a set form of prayer conduceth very much: and then, secondly, it is required also that we trust and depend upon God for His granting of them, according to the promises which He hath made unto us in Jesus Christ our Lord. And I verily believe that one great reason why men pray so often to no purpose is, because they do not take this course: but when they have done their prayers, they have done with them, and concern themselves no more about them than as if they had never prayed at all. But how can we expect that God should answer our prayers, when we ourselves do not mind whether He answers them or no, nor believe and trust upon Him for it? For certainly, trusting on God, as it is one of the highest acts of religion that we can perform, so it is that which gives life and vigour, virtue and efficacy, to our prayers; without which, we have no ground at all to expect they should be answered: for God having promised to answer our prayers, except we trust on Him for His performance of such promises, we lose the benefit of them, and, by consequence, our prayers too. And, therefore, as ever we desire that He should grant us what we pray for, when we have "directed our prayers to Him, we must still look up," expecting and hoping for the return of them.

Ps. 5. 3.

Now, as this is a thing of great consequence, so a set form of prayer is a greater help to us in it, than it is commonly thought to be. For, if we hear another utter a prayer *ex tempore*, which he never said nor we heard before, nor ever shall do it again, it is much if he himself can remember the tenth part of what he said: how much less can we that heard him, do it! And if we cannot possibly remember

what we prayed for, how is it possible for us to expect it at the hands of God, or to depend upon Him for it? But now it is quite otherwise when we use a set form of prayer; for by this means, when we have prayed, we can recollect ourselves; look over our prayers again, either in a book or in our minds, where they are imprinted; we can consider distinctly what we have asked at the hands of God, and so act our faith and confidence on Him, for the granting every petition we have put up unto Him, according to the promises which He hath made us to that purpose. And as this is the surest way whereby to obtain what we pray for, it must needs be the most edifying way of praying that we can possibly use.

These things being duly weighed, I shall now take it for granted, that the using a form in general in the public worship of God is agreeable to this Apostolical rule, "Let all things be done to edifying;" and so shall proceed to shew, that that form in particular, which our Church hath appointed to be used upon such occasions, is so too. For which end it is not necessary that I should run through every particular word, phrase, or expression, in the Common-Prayer, much less that I should vindicate and defend it from every little exception that ignorance and malice may make against something in it: for nothing ever yet was, or can be said or written, but something or other may be said or written against it, either well or ill. But my business must be to prove, that the form of Divine Service contained in the Book of Common-Prayer, which is now used in the Church of England, conduceth so much to the edifying of those that use it, that it agrees exactly to the rule which the Apostle here prescribes in that case. And this I shall demonstrate from four heads.

I. From the language.

II. From the matter or substance of it.

III. From the method.

IV. From the manner of performing it.

For if it be edifying in all these respects, it must needs be acknowledged to be so in the whole; there being nothing in it, but what may be reduced to some of these heads.

I. Therefore, as to the language, you all know the whole



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service is performed in English, the vulgar and the common language of the nation, which every one understands, and so may be edified by it. And this, indeed, is the ground and foundation of all the benefit that we can possibly receive from our public prayers : and, therefore, in the Church of Rome, the common people are made incapable of being edified by the prayers of the Church, in that they are all made in Latin, a language which they do not understand ; so that when they meet to worship God, there are seldom any in the congregation that know what is said there, except the priest that reads it, and oftentimes not he neither : by which means they have no such thing really amongst them as Common-Prayer ; neither is it possible for the common people to be ever edified by what is there said, or done, except they could be once convinced by it of the horrible abuse which their Church puts upon them, in commanding all her public devotions to be performed in an unknown tongue, directly contrary, not only to the rule in my text, but to the design of this whole chapter.

But, blessed be God for it, it is not so with us : for ours is truly Common-Prayer ; for it is written and read in that language which is common to all the congregations in the kingdom, and to every person in each congregation. So that all the people of the land, whatsoever rank or condition they are of, may join together in the use of every thing that is in it, and so be jointly edified by it ; especially, considering that it is not only all in English, but in common and plain English, such as we use in our common discourse with one another ; there are no unusual or obsolete words, no hard or uncouth phrases in it, but every thing is expressed as clearly and plainly as words can do it : so that the meanest person in the congregation, that understands but his mother-tongue, may be edified by it, as well as the greatest scholar.

But that which is chiefly to be considered in the language of the Common-Prayer, is, that it is not only common, but proper too : though the words there used are but common words, yet they are so used, that they properly express the things that are designed by them. This, I confess, may seem to be no great matter at first sight, yet it is that,

without which we might be subverted by that which was intended for our edification: for impropriety of speech, in matters of religion hath given occasion to all, or most of the schisms, errors, and heresies, that ever infested this, or any other Church, as might be easily demonstrated. Hence the Apostle gave Timothy “a form of sound words,” and <sup>2 Tim. 1. 13.</sup> charged him to hold it fast; “Hold fast,” saith he, “the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me;” as knowing, that except the words, whereby he expressed divine truths, were sound and proper, it would be impossible for his notions and opinions of the things themselves to be so. And certainly, if ever there was a form of sound words composed by men since the Apostles’ times, our Common-Prayer may justly deserve that title, it being made up of such fit and proper, such sound and wholesome words: and if we do but hold fast to them, there is no fear of our falling, either into heresy or schism: for they being duly considered, will suggest to our minds right and true apprehensions of all the articles of our Christian religion, and so not only make us sound, but build us up strong and firm in our most Holy Faith. So that, considering the plainness and perspicuity, the soundness and propriety of speech which is used in it, the least that can be said of the Common-Prayer is, that all things in it are so worded, as is most for the edifying of all those that use it.

II. And as the words in the Common-Prayer are all as edifying as words can be, so, in the second place, is the matter expressed by those words: for there is nothing in it but what is necessary for our edification; and all things that are, or can be for our edification, are plainly in it. First, I say, there is nothing in our Liturgy but what is necessary for our edification; there are no such “fables” in it, or “endless genealogies,” which, as the Apostle saith, “minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is <sup>1 Tim. 1. 4.</sup> in faith.” There are none of those vain disputations, and impertinent controversies, which have of late been raised in the Church, to its great disturbance, rather than its edification: there are no new opinions, nor airy speculations in it, which serve only to tickle men’s ears, and please their fancies, and so divert their thoughts from what they are

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about. Look it all over without prejudice and partiality, consider very seriously every thing that is in it, and you will find nothing asserted, but what is consonant to God's Word; nothing prayed for, but according to His promise; nothing required as a duty, but what is agreeable to His commands; nothing said or done, but what is grave and sober, solemn and substantial; nothing but what becomes the worship of our great and Almighty Creator; and therefore nothing but what we may some way or other be edified by.

And as there is nothing in it but what is edifying, so all things that are or can be edifying, are in it: for nothing can be necessary to edify, and make us solid and perfect Christians, but what is necessary either to be believed, or done, or else obtained by us. But there is nothing necessary to be known, or believed, but we are taught in it; nothing necessary to be done, but we are enjoined in it; nothing necessary to be obtained, but we pray for it in our public form of Divine Service.

For, first, as to those things which are necessary to be known, or believed, it is acknowledged by all Protestants, that they are fully contained in the Holy Scriptures, which make a great, if not the greatest part of our Divine Service; and are constantly read over, the Psalms once every month, the Old Testament once, and the New thrice every year; and all the fundamental Articles of our Christian faith, revealed in the Holy Scriptures, being briefly summed up in the Apostles' Creed, that we may be sure to keep them always in our minds, we have that Creed read and repeated, always once, and most commonly twice every day in the year. And seeing the Godhead of our blessed Saviour, the foundation of our whole religion, hath been, and still is denied by some; lest we should be led away with the error of the wicked, every Sunday and holyday we read the Nicene Creed, wherein the Godhead both of the Son and Holy Ghost is asserted and explained: and that we may not entertain any erroneous opinions concerning the most Holy Trinity, or the Incarnation of the Son of God, but the true Catholic faith whole and undefiled, upon certain days every year, we read that which is commonly called, "the

Creed of St. Athanasius," wherein those great mysteries are unfolded in the most proper and perspicuous terms that they are capable of.

And as all things necessary to be believed are summarily contained in the three Creeds, so they are frequently explained in the other parts of our Liturgy: insomuch, that it would be easy to frame a complete body of divinity out of the words there used; at least, of all such things as are needful for any man in the world to believe or know, in order to his eternal Salvation.

The same may be said also of all those things which we ought to do; for as we here do whatsoever is necessary to be done, in order to our worship of God in this place, so we are here taught whatsoever is necessary to be learned, in order to our serving God in all other places: so that no man that frequents our public congregations, where the Common Prayer is used, can ever plead ignorance of any one duty whatsoever; for if it be not his own fault, he may there be instructed in every thing which He that made him requires of him: for here, as I observed before, we constantly read the Holy Scripture, which, as the Apostle saith, "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly instructed unto all good works." <sup>2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.</sup> And seeing it hath pleased the Most High God to comprise His whole will, and by consequence our duty, in the Ten Commandments," hence we read them constantly every Sunday and holyday throughout the whole year; by which means every one, that doth not wilfully shut his eyes, may clearly see, and fully understand, his whole duty both to God and man: especially considering, that in your prayers themselves also there is frequent mention made of all those vices which ought to be avoided, and of all those good works which ought to be performed by us. So that we can never come to Church, but we are still put in mind, both of "what we ought," and "what we ought not" to do, that we may be saved.

And then, as there is nothing necessary to be "known," or "done," but we are taught it, so neither is there any thing necessary to be "obtained," to make us either holy or



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happy, but we pray for it in the Common Prayer: for here we have the Lord's Prayer, a prayer composed by Wisdom itself; and therefore it must needs be the most perfect and divine prayer that ever was made. Neither do we use it only once, but in every distinct service of the Church; in our prayers before we read the Holy Scripture, and in our prayer after; towards the end of the Litany, and in the beginning of the Communion Service, and in every Office of the Church beside. And the reason is, because, although our Saviour hath not forbidden us to use any other prayer, yet he Hath expressly commanded us to say this, whensoever we pray: and, therefore, in obedience to His command, our Church hath wisely ordered, that in all, and in every solemn address that we make to the Most High God, we always say this prayer; lest otherwise, by our transgression of His command, in omitting this, we make all our other prayers to be ineffectual. And besides, by the constant use of this, amongst our other prayers, we are always sure to use one prayer, both absolutely perfect in itself, and most acceptable unto Him to Whom we pray, it being a prayer of His Own composure: so that we speak unto God in His Own words, and so may be confident that we ask nothing of Him but exactly according to His will.

And though all things necessary for us be virtually contained in the Lord's Prayer, yet our Church, in conformity to the Catholic and Apostolical, hath thought good to add some other prayers, in which the same things are more particularly expressed and desired at the hands of our great and most bountiful Benefactor; all which are so contrived, that there is nothing evil, or hurtful for us, but we pray against it: there is no vice or lust, but we desire it may be subdued under us: no grace or virtue, but we pray it may be planted and grow in us. Insomuch, that if we do but constantly and sincerely pray over all those prayers, and steadfastly believe and trust in God for His answering of them, and so obtain what we there pray for, we cannot but be as real and true Saints, as happy and blessed creatures, as it is possible for us to be in this world. Neither do we here pray for ourselves only, but according to the Apostle's advice, we make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and

giving of thanks for all men ; yea, for our very enemies, as our Saviour hath commanded us. And what can be desired Matt. 5. 44. more than all this, to make the matter of the Common-Prayer edifying either to ourselves or others ? Nothing certainly, but truth and sincerity of heart in the using of it.

I cannot pass from this head, before I have observed one thing more unto you, concerning the prayers in general, and that is, that they are not carried on in one continued discourse, but divided into many short prayers and collects, such as that is, which our Lord Himself composed ; and that might be one reason wherefore our Church so ordered it, that so she might follow our Lord's example in it, Who best knew what kind of prayers were fittest for us to use. And indeed, we cannot but all find by our own experience, how difficult it is to keep our minds long intent upon any thing, much more upon so great things as the object and subject of our prayers are ; but, do what we can, we are still liable to distractions : so that there is a kind of necessity to break off sometimes, to give ourselves a breathing time, that our thoughts being loosened for a while, they may with more ease, and less danger of distraction, be tied up again, as it is necessary they should be, all the while that we are actually praying to the Supreme Being of the world.

Besides that, in order to the performing our devotions aright to the Most High God, it is necessary that our souls be possessed all along with due apprehensions of his greatness and glory : to which purpose our short prayers contribute very much ; for every one of them beginning with some of the properties or perfections of God, and so suggesting to our minds right apprehensions of Him at first, it is easy to preserve them in our minds during the space of a short prayer, which in a long one would be apt to scatter and vanish away.

But that which I look upon as one of the principal reasons, why our public devotions are, and should be, divided into short collects, is this : our Blessed Saviour, we know, hath often told us, that whatsoever we ask in His Name, we shall receive ; and so hath directed us in all our prayers to make use of His Name, and to ask nothing but upon the account of His merit and Mediation for us ; upon which all

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our hopes and expectations from God do wholly and solely depend. Hence, therefore, (as it always was so) it cannot but be judged necessary, that the Name of Christ be frequently inserted in our prayers, that so we may lift up our hearts unto Him, and act our faith upon Him, for our obtaining the good things we pray for. And so we see it is in the Common Prayer; for whatsoever it is we ask of God, we presently add, "through Jesus Christ our Lord," or something to that purpose: and so ask nothing but according to our Lord's direction, even in His Name. And this is the reason that makes our prayers so short; for, take away the conclusion of every collect or prayer, "in the Name of Christ," and you may join them all together, and make them but as one continued prayer. But this would be to offer manifest violence to the prayers, by taking away that which gives them all their force and energy, and so making them ineffectual to the purposes for which they are used: for certainly, the asking of all things in the Name of Christ, as we do in the Common Prayer, is the only way whereby to obtain what we desire, and by consequence the most edifying way of praying in the world.

III. The next thing to be considered in the Common Prayer is the method, which is admirable, and as edifying, if possible, as the matter itself. This none can deny, who doth but fully understand, and seriously consider of it: which, therefore, that you may all do, I shall briefly run through the whole, and give you what light I can into it, that you may clearly see, not only the reasonableness, but the excellency of it all along. For which purpose, I shall instance only such things which offer themselves at first sight, to any one that doth but cast his eye upon it.

Let us, therefore, suppose a congregation of sober and devout Christians (such as we all should be) met together to perform their public devotions to Almighty God, every one of which hath lift up his heart privately unto Him already, imploring His aid and assistance in the performance of so great a work, and so are all now ready to set about it. The first thing we do, is to read some sentences of Holy Scripture, that so we may begin our devotions unto God in His Own words: and they are all such sentences as put us

in mind of our sins against Him, and of His promise to pardon them if we repent; that so we may present and carry ourselves with that reverence and godly fear before Him, as becometh those who are sensible of their own vileness and unworthiness to approach so great a Majesty: and, likewise, with that faith and humble confidence, which becometh those who believe that He, upon our repentance, will pardon our sins, and accept both our persons and performances, according to the promises which He hath made unto us.

Then follows a grave exhortation, concerning the end of our present assembling, which is of great use, and ought never to be omitted: for men generally are apt to rush into the presence of God, without ever considering what they go about; whereas, this exhortation puts us upon considering the greatness of the work which we are now engaged in, and so upon composing our thoughts, and preparing ourselves for the due performance of it.

Our minds being thus brought into a right frame and temper for it, we all, both minister and people, prostrate ourselves before the Most High God, confessing upon our knees the manifold sins and wickedness that we have committed against Him: which confession is so contrived, that all and every person, in any congregation whatsoever, may join in it; for it runs in general terms, and yet so too, that every particular person may, and ought, in his own mind to confess and acknowledge his own sins, which he knows himself to be guilty of: as where we say, "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done;" at the saying of this, every one should call his own sins to remembrance, and what duties he knows himself to have omitted, and what vices he knows himself to have committed, and confess them accordingly unto God. And when we have thus confessed our sins to God, we presently implore His mercy in the pardon of them; and His grace, that for the future we may forsake them.

And whilst we are thus upon our knees, humbly confessing and bewailing our sins before the Lord our God, the



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minister stands up, and in the Name of God declares and pronounceth to all those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His Holy Gospel, "the absolution and remission of all their sins:" which, though spoke also in general terms, yet every particular person there present ought to apply it to himself, so as to be fully persuaded in his own mind, that if he doth but sincerely repent, and believe the Gospel, he is perfectly absolved from all his sins by God Himself, according to the promises which He hath made unto mankind, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

And now, looking upon ourselves as absolved from our sins, upon our repentance and faith in Christ, and, by consequence, as reconciled to God, we take the boldness to call Him Father, humbly addressing ourselves to Him in that divine form of prayer which He Himself hath given us. Which done, we lift up our hearts and voices unto God for His assistance of us in what we do, in the words of David; Ps. 51. 15. the minister crying out, "O Lord, open thou our lips;" and the people answering, "And our mouths shall shew forth Thy praise." The minister again, "O God, make speed to save us:" the people, "O Lord, make haste to help us:" and then immediately we all lift up our bodies to stand upon our feet, and so put ourselves into a posture of praising and magnifying the Eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for His infinite goodness and mercy towards us; for which purpose the minister first saith, or sings the *Gloria Patri*, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;" and the people, to shew their consent, answer, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen." But not thinking this to be enough, the minister calls upon the people again, saying, "Praise ye the Lord;" and the people answer, "The Lord's Name be praised:" and then we go on to praise Him together, saying or singing the ninety-fifth Psalm, *Venite exultemus Domino*, "O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation," &c. And so proceed to the Psalms appointed for the day; after every one of which, to testify our belief in the most sacred Trinity, and our acknowledgment of that infinite love and goodness, which

every one of those Divine Persons hath manifested unto us, we repeat that incomparable Hymn, "Glory be to the Father," &c.

Our hearts being thus raised up to God in praising and admiring Him, we are now in a fit temper and disposition to hear what He shall speak unto us; and therefore have a chapter read out of the Old Testament; and that in its ordinary course, except upon Sundays and holidays, when, more people attending the public worship of God, than can conveniently come upon other days, we read some select chapter proper for the day, and such as is judged most edifying to all that are there present. And having thus heard God speaking unto us in His Holy Word, we presently fall upon praising Him again for so unspeakable a mercy, saying or singing in the morning the *Te Deum*; one of the most heavenly and seraphic Hymns that was ever composed by men: or else the "Song of the Three Children," which is nothing but a paraphrase upon that which David sang so often upon earth, and which the holy Angels sing continually in Heaven, even "Hallelujah, praise ye the Lord." Wherein, we being all sensible how far short we ourselves come of praising God sufficiently, we call upon all the creatures of the world to do it, "Bless ye the Lord, praise Him, and magnify Him for ever." In the afternoon, we sing either the *Magnificat*, or else the ninety-eighth Psalm; both which being taken out of God's Own Word, cannot but be very pleasing and acceptable unto Him.

After this, our souls being got upon the wing again, and soaring aloft in the contemplation of the Divine perfections, we are now rightly qualified to hear and receive the sublime mysteries of the Gospel; and therefore have a chapter read to us out of the New Testament. After which, we being revived with the good tidings of the Gospel, and filled with admiration at the infinite goodness of God therein revealed to us, we break forth again into praising and adoring of Him, in the "Song of Zacharias," or else the hundredth Psalm, in the morning; and at evening, either the sixty-seventh Psalm, or else the "Song of Old Symeon," still concluding with *Gloria Patri*.

Now, having thus heard some part of the Word of God

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read to us, and expressed our thankfulness unto Him for it, to signify our assent, not only to what we have heard, but to the whole Scripture, we all, with one heart and voice, repeat the Apostles' Creed, wherein the sum and substance of it is contained; and so profess ourselves to continue in the number of Christ's disciples, and that as we were at first baptized, so we still believe in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, God blessed for evermore.

Hitherto we have been mostly taken up with confessing our sins to God, imploring His mercy in the pardon of them, hearing His Most Holy Word, acknowledging His goodness to us, and praising and magnifying His Name for it: by which means, except we have been extremely wanting to ourselves, our hearts cannot but be so united and fixed upon God, that we are now rightly disposed to make known our wants, and present our petitions before Him. This, therefore, is the next thing we set upon: but seeing that neither minister nor people can possibly do it aright, without the assistance of God Himself, therefore each of them first pray for His special presence with the other; the one saying, "The Lord be with you," the other, "And with thy spirit." And then, immediately falling down upon our knees, we adore and supplicate each Person of the Most Blessed Trinity to have mercy upon us; "Lord, have mercy upon us; Christ, have mercy upon us; Lord, have mercy upon us." After which, we address ourselves to God in the words that He hath put into our mouths, saying the Lord's Prayer; which ended, the minister and people by turns lift up their hearts to God in some short and heavenly ejaculations, striving, as it were, to outvie each other in prevailing with the Almighty to pour down His blessings upon us: and then, in an humble and solemn manner, we join together in supplicating His Divine Majesty for His grace and favour, His defence and protection, His mercy and blessing, for ourselves, for the king, for the royal family, for His Church, and for all mankind. And thus we do ordinarily in the Collects appointed for that purpose: but upon Wednesdays and Fridays (upon which days the Primitive Church used to perform their more than ordinary devotions) as also upon the Lord's day in the morning, we do it in the Litany, and in such a

Litany as comprehends all, and every thing that we can ever need to desire of Almighty God, either for ourselves or others.

After this, upon Sundays and holidays, we proceed to the Communion Service; and therefore, approaching to the Lord's table, we begin it with His Own prayer: and after another short prayer to God, to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, we read the Ten Commandments, which He hath enjoined us to observe; and after every commandment we ask God mercy for our transgression thereof for the time past, and grace to keep the same for the time to come, saying, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law." And then, after a prayer for the king, and the Collect for the day, we read the Epistle and Gospel, that is, most commonly a short paragraph taken out of the Canonical Epistles, and another out of one of the Holy Gospels; which was the ancient way of reading the Scripture, before it was divided into chapters. And we do it now, to prepare us the better for the communion of the body and blood of Christ, therein revealed to us. But, seeing we neither do, nor can read over the whole, we repeat the substance of it in the Nicene Creed; which it is very necessary we should do at this time, that so we may demonstrate ourselves to be Christians, and so capable of receiving the most Holy Communion.

He that all this while hath employed himself as he ought to do in the service of our Church, cannot but find himself strangely edified by it. Yet, howsoever, that nothing may be wanting that may any way conduce to our edification, after the Nicene Creed, our Church hath appointed a sermon to be preached; which if sound, plain, and practical, as it ought to be, cannot but be very edifying too.

And now we may be well supposed to be so far edified, as to be raised up to the highest pitch of devotion that we can arrive at in this world, and so are fit to be admitted to the highest Ordinance of the Church, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper: and, therefore, we now betake ourselves to it. But, that we may not appear before our Lord empty, we first offer up something to Him of what He hath be-



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stowed upon us, to be disposed of to pious and charitable uses; testifying thereby our acknowledgment of His goodness to us, and that we have nothing but what we receive from Him. And to excite and encourage us to do this, all the while that we are offering, we have some select sentences of Scripture read to us, wherein God either commands us to be charitable, or else promiseth a blessing to those that are so. And then we pray "for Christ's whole Church militant here on earth;" whereby we profess ourselves to be real members of it, and desirous to hold communion with it in Christ's mystical body and blood. And so we proceed to the celebration of it; in which the method is so clear, so apparently edifying, that I need not say any thing of it: but shall only observe two things in general concerning it.

First; That the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper being the highest mystery in all our religion, as representing the death of the Son of God to us, hence that place where this Sacrament is administered was always made and reputed the highest place in the Church. And therefore also it was wont to be separated from the rest of the Church by a screen or partition of network, in Latin *cancelli*, and that so generally, that from thence the place itself is called the 'Chancel.' That this was antiently observed in the building of all considerable Churches (for I speak not of private oratories or chapels) within few centuries after the Apostles themselves, even in the days of Constantine the Great, as well as in all ages since; I could easily demonstrate from the records of those times. But having purposely waved antiquity hitherto, I am loth to trouble you with it now. But I mention it at present, only because some, perhaps, may wonder why this should be observed in our Church, rather than in all the other Churches which have lately been built in this city. Whereas they should rather wonder, why it was not observed in all other as well as this. For, besides our obligations to conform as much as may be to the practice of the Universal Church, and to avoid novelty and singularity in all things relating to the worship of God; it cannot be easily imagined, that the Catholic Church in all ages and places, for thirteen or fourteen hundred years together,

should observe such a custom as this, except there were great reasons for it.

What they were, it is not necessary for us to inquire now. It may be sufficient to observe at present, that the chancel in our Christian Churches was always looked upon as answerable to the Holy of Holies in the Temple; which, you [Ex. 26. 33.] know, was separated from the sanctuary or body of the Temple, by the command of God Himself. And that this place being appropriated to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, it ought to be contrived, as may be most convenient for those who are to partake of the blessed Ordinance. But it must needs be more convenient for those who are to enjoy communion with Christ, and in Him with one another, in this Holy Sacrament, to meet together as one body, in one place separated for that purpose, than to be dispersed, as otherwise they would be, some in one and some in another part of the Church: or, in short, it is much better for the place to be separate than the people.

Furthermore, it is not only convenient, but in some sense necessary, for every communicant to observe and take special notice of the several circumstances which our Lord hath ordained to be used in this Sacrament, as the breaking of the bread, and the consecrating both that and the wine, to represent His death, the breaking of His body, and the shedding of His blood for our sins; that so our hearts may be the more affected with it, and by consequence our souls more edified by it. But this cannot be so well done, except there be a place set apart for it, where they may all be placed, about or near the Communion-table, and so behold what is there done at the consecration of the elements. Hence also it is, that the seats there are, and ought to be, so ordered, that all that are in them may still look that way, and contemplate upon their blessed Saviour, there evidently set forth as crucified for them.

The other thing that I would observe unto you concerning the Holy Communion, is this, that our Church requireth, or at least supposeth it to be administered every Lord's Day and every holiday throughout the year, as it was in the Primitive Church: for that is the reason that the Communion Service is appointed to be used upon all such

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days, and to be read at the Communion-table, that so the Minister may be there ready to administer it unto all that desire to partake of it; which shews the great care that our Church hath of all her members, that they might be edified and confirmed in the faith: to which nothing contributes more than frequent communion at our Lord's Table; which if people could once be persuaded to, they would soon find greater benefit by it than I can express, or they themselves, till then, imagine. I shall say no more of it at present, but only this, that I am so sensible of what I now say, that could I be sure to have a sufficient number of communicants, I should be heartily glad to administer the Holy Sacrament every Lord's Day, both for their sakes and my own too.

Thus I have given you a short scheme of that excellent method wherein our Divine Service is performed; which whosoever rightly considers, will need no other argument to convince him, that it is according to the Apostle's rule, very edifying indeed.

IV. The last thing to be considered in it, is the manner of its performance; by which I mean only the several postures of the body, as standing and kneeling, which are used in it; for they also are done to edifying.

While we say or sing the Hymns and Psalms to the glory and praise of God, we stand up, not only to signify, but to excite the elevation of our minds at that time: for as, on the one hand, if our souls be really lift up in the praises of God, our bodies will naturally lift up themselves, to accompany them as far as they can towards Heaven: so, on the other hand, the raising up of our bodies helps towards the raising up of our souls too, by putting us in mind of that high and heavenly work we are now about; wherein, according to our weak capacities, we join with the Choir of Heaven, in praising God now, as we hope to do it for evermore. For this cause also, we stand at the Creeds; for they being confessions of our faith in God, as such they come under the proper notions of Hymns or songs of praise to Him; all our praising God being really nothing else but our confessing and acknowledging Him to be what He is in Himself and to us. And besides that, by our standing at the Creeds and Gospels, we signify our assent unto them,

and our readiness to defend them, to the utmost of our power, against all opposition whatsoever. And as for the Gospels particularly, they contain the very acts which our Lord did, and the very words which He spake when He was upon earth; and therefore, we who profess Him to be our Lord and Master, cannot surely but stand up, when we hear Him speaking, and listen diligently to those gracious words which proceed out of His Divine mouth.

And as, when we praise God, we raise up ourselves as high as we can towards Heaven, so when we pray unto Him, we fall down as low as we can towards the earth, not daring to present our supplications to the absolute Monarch of the whole world any other ways than upon our knees; which is so proper, so natural a posture of supplicants, that if all men would but duly consider what they do when they pray to Almighty God, the Church need never have commanded them to kneel at that time; for they could not choose but do it; no, not although the place where they are should seem ever so inconvenient for it: for we find our blessed Saviour Himself kneeling at His Luke 22. 41. prayer in the garden, upon the bare ground, and St. Paul Acts 21. 5. upon the seashore, where he could have no other cushion but stones or sand. Howsoever, to take off all those little excuses that men are apt to make for themselves in this case, the seats in this Church are so disposed, and all things so prepared in them, that there can be no inconvenience at all in it, but rather all the conveniences for kneeling that can be desired. And, therefore, if any one of you shall neglect to kneel, while the prayers are read, you will give us too much cause to call your religion into question, or to suspect you have none at all; for if you had, you durst not, you could not, offer such a manifest affront to the great Creator of the world, as to carry yourselves no otherwise while you pray to Him, than as if you were conversing with your fellow-creatures. But why do I speak of such persons praying unto God! It is too much to be feared they do not pray at all, nor come to Church for any better purpose, than only to see and be seen. I am sure they perform no act of external worship of adoration unto God, nor shew Him that respect and reverence which is due unto Him;



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Whereas, if all and every person in the congregation would always be upon their knees, while they put up their petitions to the Most High God, what a mighty advantage would this be, not only to every one in particular, but to the whole congregation in general! For as every one would by this means keep his heart more steadfast in the true fear and dread of God, and likewise more certainly obtain the good things he prays for, as the Fathers frequently assert, so the whole congregation also would be very much edified by it: for by this means we should excite and enflame each other's devotions, confirm and strengthen one another's faith, and convince both ourselves and all that see us, that religion is indeed a serious thing, and that we believe it to be so, by our serving God with so much reverence and godly fear, as this humble posture representeth. And, therefore, as you tender the love of God, the credit of religion, or the Salvation of your own souls, I beseech you all, in the Name of Him that made you, that whensoever you come hither to pray unto Him, you do it in that awful, lowly, and solemn manner, which our Church commandeth, and as becometh creatures, when you speak to your Great and Almighty Creator; that so you may give true worship and honour unto Him, and also receive that benefit and edification to yourselves, which He hath promised, and you expect from your public prayers: this being certainly the most edifying posture that you can possibly use upon such occasions.

From what hath been hitherto discoursed concerning the language, the matter, the method, and the manner of performing the Divine service, as contained and prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer, we may positively conclude, that it agrees exactly with the rule in my text, even that "all things in it are done to edifying;" which was the thing I undertook to prove. I know that many other arguments might be brought to shew the excellency and usefulness of the Common Prayer; but these already produced, are sufficient to convince any sober and considering Christian of it. And if there be any here present, who are not yet convinced by what they have heard of it, I desire only one

thing of them, and that is, that they would but make trial of it for a while; for my charity prompts me to believe, that all the zeal that some express against the Common Prayer, and all that indifferency that is in others for it, proceeds only from their ignorance of what it is, or at least, from their want of an experimental knowledge of it: for let any man that seriously minds the worship of God, and the Salvation of his soul, before all things else; let such a one, I say, set himself in good earnest to use the Common Prayer, as he ought to do, for some considerable time, and I do not doubt but that, by the blessing of God, he will find that benefit and edification by it, that his own experience shall convince him of all that I have now said, more than all the arguments that I have, or any man in the world can ever produce to him. Some perhaps may think this to be a paradox; but I do not question, but that many here present can attest it upon their own knowledge, having found themselves more confirmed in their faith, more settled in their religion, more humbled for their sins, more supported under their troubles, more inflamed with love to God, and desires of heaven, every way more edified by the constant use of the Common Prayer, than they could ever have believed it possible to have been, except they had found it to have been so by their own experience.

Now, these things being thus briefly considered, I shall observe only two things from them. The first is the extraordinary prudence, as well as piety, of our first reformers, who first compiled the Book of Common Prayer, so exactly conformable to the Word of God, and the Apostolical canon in my text; which I cannot but ascribe to the same extraordinary aid and assistance from God, whereby they were afterwards enabled to suffer persecution, yea, martyrdom itself for His sake, and so to confirm what they have done with their own blood; which certainly is no small commendation of it.

The other thing I would observe unto you, is the reason why the Devil hath had such a spite against the Common Prayer, ever since it was first made; for the more edifying it is to God's people, the more destructive it must needs be of the Devil's kingdom. And, therefore, it is no wonder

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that he hath all along employed the utmost of his power and policy to blast its reputation, and so to discourage and dissuade men from the use of it. And, by the permission of God, for the punishment of this ungrateful nation, he hath so far prevailed in his design, that the Liturgy hath been twice cast out of the Church since it was first brought into it; once in the reign of Queen Mary, and then again in the days of King Charles the First.

In the reign of Queen Mary, you all know who were her instruments in the doing of it, even the Papists: for they clearly and truly foresaw that their erroneous opinions could never be believed, nor superstitious practices observed, in the nation, so long as the Common Prayer was used; forasmuch as there is nothing in it but what is sound and agreeable to the Gospel, and so contrary to the groundless opinions which the Church of Rome would obtrude upon the world for Articles of Faith. And besides that, there are many expressions purposely inserted in it, to arm us against the Pope's supremacy, indulgences, invocation of Saints, transubstantiation, and other Popish errors; so that it would have been impossible for the Romish religion to be ever restored in the nation, unless the Common Prayer was first removed: which therefore they took care to have done as soon as possible. But within a few years after, even the first of Queen Elizabeth, it was brought in again; and as the Reformation was begun before, so from that time forward it was carried on and perfected chiefly by the means of the Common Prayer: for it is very observable, that in the reign of King Edward the Sixth, and for several years too of Queen Elizabeth, there was little or no preaching in most parts of the kingdom, and few then could read English; and yet, by the constant and general use of the Liturgy, and God's blessing upon it, the whole nation was so edified in the true religion, that there was scarce one in an hundred but forsook and abhorred all Popish doctrines and superstitions: which is an undeniable argument, that, in this respect also, it is as edifying as it is possible for a thing of that nature to be; insomuch, that so long as the Common Prayer is used and frequented as it ought to be, it is morally impossible for Popery to get any ground amongst us: but if

this bulwark was once removed, which God forbid, our grand adversary would soon accomplish his malicious designs upon us, one way or other.

This he knows well enough, and therefore hath left no stone unturned to effect it; but what he hath done before by the Papists, he afterwards brought about again, by other means, in the reign of King Charles the First: for by what kind of spirit the Common Prayer was then cast out, you all know, and some of you found by woful experience. All that I shall say of it is only this, that the same spirit that then stirred up people so violently against the Common Prayer, stirred them up at the same time to rebel against their king, to take away men's estates and lives, contrary to all law and justice; and at last, to murder one of the most pious princes that ever lived: and whether that was the Spirit of Christ or Anti-Christ, God or the Devil, judge you; be sure the consequences of its being laid aside at that time were very sad: for people being deprived of that whereby they should have been edified, were immediately tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, until, at length, many of them fell into the most pernicious and damnable heresies that were ever heard of in the Church; yea, together with the Liturgy, they laid aside all distinction betwixt sacred and common things; by which means the whole nation was in danger of being overspread with profaneness and irreligion.

But, blessed be the Name of the Most High God for it, He was once more pleased to appear for us, and in a miraculous manner to restore our Common Prayer to His Church, together with our gracious Sovereign to his kingdoms. But what shall we render to the Lord for so great a blessing as this is? All that He expects, or we can give Him for it, is only to make the best use of it that we can. This, therefore, is that which I now pray and beseech you all for the future to do: do not think it enough to be for the Common Prayer, and to come now and then to hear it. This you may do, as many do, and yet receive no more benefit by it, than as if there was none at all to be received; which, therefore, can by no means be imputed to the Common Prayer itself, but to the negligence of those that use it. Neither must you think



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it enough to talk high for it, or rail at those who are not so happy as to be rightly informed about it; but rather take all opportunities to inform them, and by all means possible to convince them of the excellency and usefulness of it; which you can never do so effectually, as by your out-stripping and exceeding them in virtue and good works: for this is, and ever will be a plain demonstration that the Common Prayer is indeed far more edifying than those new modes of religion, which they are so unhappily seduced into. That, therefore, you may do this, and so both experience in yourselves and demonstrate unto others, the truth and certainty of what you have now heard concerning the Common Prayer, I desire you to observe these few rules in the using of it.

First; Come not to our public prayers only out of custom or for fashion's sake, as the manner of some is, but out of a sincere obedience to God's commands, and with a sure trust and confidence in His promises for His blessing upon what you do. For which end it will be very good, as you go to Church, to bethink yourselves whither you are going, and what you are to do there, that so laying aside all other business, you may put yourselves into a right temper for so great a work.

Secondly; frequent our public prayers as often as conveniently you can. The oftener you are at them, the better you will like them, and the more edified you will be by them; and, therefore, do not satisfy yourselves with hearing them once a-week: in this city, as also in many other places of the kingdom, especially where there are cathedrals, or collegiate Churches, you may enjoy the benefit of them publicly every day, and so keep your hearts continually in a holy and heavenly frame, and always live as becometh Christians: and if you neglect such opportunities as are now put into your hands, you will one day wish you had not; but then wishing will do no good.

Thirdly; if possible, come always at the beginning of Divine Service; otherwise you will certainly miss of something that would have been edifying to you, and perhaps, of that which at that time might have done you more good than all the rest. Neither will you lose the benefit only of part of it, but in some measure of the whole too; all the parts of it

being linked together in so excellent a manner and method, that they influence and assist each other: so that nothing can be omitted either by minister or people, but the whole will suffer by it, and lose something of that virtue and efficacy, which otherwise you will find in it.

Fourthly; all the while that you are in God's house carry yourself as in His special presence, and suitably to the work that you are about; standing while ye praise God, and kneeling when ye pray unto Him, as our Church hath directed you: for though these may seem but little things in themselves, yet they are of great consequence, both to our worshipping of God aright, and to our being edified by what we do, as I have shewed before.

Lastly; take special care all along to keep your minds intent upon the matter in hand: when you confess your sins to God, do it with a hearty and sincere repentance for all the errors of your life past; when the Absolution is pronounced, receive it with a firm and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour; when you repeat or sing the Hymns and Psalms, raise up your spirits as high as you can, to join with those above, in praising and magnifying the eternal God; when the Word of God is read, hearken diligently unto it, and consider seriously what He that made you saith to you, and requireth of you, and resolve, by His blessing, to believe and live accordingly: and all the while that you are upon your knees, putting up your petitions to the Most High God, let your whole souls be employed in it, earnestly desiring the good things you pray for at His gracious hands, and humbly confiding on His faithful promises for the granting of them. By this means you will perform reasonable service unto God; and, by consequence, that which will be very acceptable unto Him, and as profitable and edifying to yourselves: whereas they that do not observe this rule, cannot be properly said to pray, or serve God at all. And therefore it is no wonder that they come to Church and hear the Common Prayer read, and yet are no way edified by it. Indeed it is impossible that they should: forasmuch as all the benefit and edification that we can possibly receive from any of our devotions, depends very much upon the due intention of our minds in the performance of them; to which, as I have shewn, both a form of

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prayer in general, and ours in particular, is a very great help.

Do but observe these plain and necessary rules in using of the Common Prayer, (without which you cannot be truly said to use, but rather to abuse it) and you will soon find what I have said about it to be true, even that “all things in it are done to edifying.” And therefore I would to God, that not only you that hear me at this time, but all the people of the nation, could be once persuaded to do so. What a holy nation, what a peculiar people should we then become! How pious towards God! How loyal to our sovereign! How just and charitable to one another! For by our constant worshipping Almighty God in so solemn and devout a manner as this is, our hearts will be overawed with so great a fear of His Divine Majesty, that we should never dare willingly to offend Him; our minds would be filled and impregnated with such a sense of His power and sovereignty, that we should honour and reverence it in those also whom He hath set over us: our souls would be raised up so much above the world, that we should not do an ill act to gain it wholly to ourselves. In short, we should be every day edified more and more in faith, in love, in humility, in self-denial, in temperance, in patience, in all true grace and virtue; and so we should go from strength to strength, from one degree of grace unto another, until at length we arrive at glory and perfection in the highest Heavens; where we shall spend eternity itself in praising and adoring the Most High God, as for all the other mercies which He hath vouchsafed to us, so in a particular manner for our being members of such an Apostolical Church, wherein all things are done to edifying.

Which God of His infinite mercy grant we may all do, in and through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; to Whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

## SERMON II.

### OF THE HAPPINESS OF THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

Preached before Queen Mary at Whitehall, October 12, 1690.

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COLOS. i. 12.

*Giving thanks unto the Father, Which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light.*

ALTHOUGH the greatest part of the numerous offspring, which hath hitherto proceeded from Adam's loins, be departed out of this life, and are seen no more among us, yet we must not therefore think that they are ceased to be, or to live; for still their souls are as really alive in the other world, as we are now in this. And as it is with us here, that some live ill, and others well; so it is with them too, only in a higher degree: for some, and as we have just cause to fear, the greatest part of them, live with the fiends of Hell in the infernal pit, where they have no light, nothing but darkness and horror to the utmost extremity round about them; where they are always weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth; fretting and tormenting themselves at the remembrance of their former sins and follies; where, as Christ Himself hath told us, "The worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" that is, their consciences, like greedy and insatiable worms, are always gnawing, and the fire of God's wrath is continually burning in their breasts, never to be quenched or abated; they cannot forbear thinking of what they have done, though every thought cuts them to their very hearts, and seems ready to split them in sunder.

They cannot forbear looking upon God, although they can see nothing in Him but the wrath and anger which they



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themselves have kindled; which so incenses and enrageth their minds, that they are all in a flame with fury and indignation at themselves for it: by which means they are continually, as it were, upon a rack, distorted, afflicted, distracted, confounded; hurried about from place to place, but can find no rest, no quiet; every thing is uneasy and troublesome to them, yea, they are a burden to themselves, they cannot endure themselves, but wish ten thousand times they had been better, or had never been at all, or could cease to be, or could be any thing but what they are: but all in vain. And, which is worst of all, they do not only suffer the extremity of pain and anguish at present, but they can see no end of it; yea, they see there will be no end at all, being fully assured that this must be their portion for ever.

Whereas, on the other side, there are others, who are not only free from all the miseries and torments which those poor creatures undergo, but always live in Heaven, in light, and love, and joy, and peace, and glory, the highest that they are able to imagine or desire; being brisk and lively, cheerful and pleasant, holy and happy all over: and that too, (as we shall see more presently) not only now and then, but continually; nor for some time only, but to all eternity.

Now we, who are still upon earth, are as yet in neither of these states, neither so extremely miserable as the first are, nor so perfectly happy as those are we spake of last; but as it were in the middle between both. But so soon as ever we depart out of this life, we shall be immediately in one of them, as certainly as we are now here. And I do not question but that you all hope for and desire the latter, even to live with those blessed souls which enjoy perpetual rest and felicity in the other world; and that one great end of your coming hither at this time, is to learn what you must do in order to it: and, verily, ye do well to take all opportunities you can get, of being assisted and directed in it; for it is a great thing that you propose to yourselves, which can never be attained without much care and pains about it. And you are not certain how long time you have to do it in, but most certain it is not very long. But, blessed be God, you are all as yet in a capacity of obtaining it, and it is your own fault if any of you shall happen to miss of it: for Almighty

God plainly shews how desirous He is to have you live with Him, and so be happy in the other world, in that He is still pleased to afford you all the means that He hath appointed for that purpose. Witness your meeting together here at this time, to join together in prayer to His Divine goodness for His assistance in the pursuit of it; and to be put in mind of the course and method which you are to take for the accomplishment of so great and good an end. Concerning which, therefore, I shall give you the best and plainest directions I can from the words which I have now read. In which we may observe,

I. What kind of persons they are, who are or shall be happy in the other world; they are Saints.

II. The happiness they enjoy there, here called, "The inheritance of the Saints in light."

III. They who desire to enjoy that happiness, must be duly qualified for it, or, as it is here expressed, "made meet to be partakers of it."

IV. All who are so qualified, must ascribe it wholly unto God, and give Him thanks for it, as we see here St. Paul doth; "Giving thanks to the Father, Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light."

I. Therefore, as to the persons who live so happily in the other world, they are here called Saints. It is the inheritance of the Saints, of all the Saints, and of them only; it is proper and peculiar to them, so that none else have any right or title to it, nor can ever have any part or portion in it. And that there is such a company and society of men in the world, which are truly called Saints, cannot be denied by any Christian; it being one of the articles of our Creed, wherein we profess to believe, there is a Communion of Saints; and unless we be of that communion, we can never partake of the inheritance of the Saints.

But the great question is, What it is to be a Saint? or who may be truly and properly called Saints, men of holiness, or holy men, as the word signifies? But this we can never fully understand, unless we first state the true notion of sanctity or holiness, from whence they are so called. Now holiness and sanctity, in its highest perfection, is one of the

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perfections of God Himself, Who often calls Himself "the Holy One of Israel," and sometimes absolutely, "the Holy One." And as He sometimes swears by Himself, at other times He swears by His Holiness. Whereby He gives us to understand, that He Himself is Holiness; or, which is all one, Holiness is Himself, His own Divine Nature or Essence. And that is the reason why they who partake "of His Holiness," are said to partake "of His Divine Nature."

And hence it is, that when the holy Angels would celebrate the praises of the Most High God in the highest manner they can, they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." And hence also it is, that when God designed to make man after His Own image, as like Him as a creature could be, He made him perfectly holy. And now that this image is defaced in us, if it be restored again to any man, so that he becomes "a new man," he is said to be "created after God," that is, after the likeness of God, in "righteousness and true holiness." So that this is the great perfection wherein we are at first made, and ought again to become like to God our Maker, Who therefore commands us to be holy, as He is Holy: "As He Which hath called you is Holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." From whence it appears, that though we cannot be holy in the same measure as God is, Who is so without and beyond all measure; yet we should be so, after the same manner as He is; or rather our holiness should be of the same kind or nature with His, and as like it, as it is possible for it to be.

Hence, therefore, as holiness, when attributed to God, denotes the purity and excellency of His Divine nature, whereby He is exalted above all things else; so, when attributed to men, it signifies the purity and excellency of their nature, whereby they are refined and raised above the rest of mankind. This the Apostle teacheth us, where he opposeth holiness to uncleanness, saying, "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness;" and David, where he calls the Saints that are upon earth, "the excellent," implying, that Saints, as such, excel all other persons, by reason of their holiness, that is, the highest excellency which their nature is capable of; which, therefore, doth not consist

in any particular acts or habits, either of the soul or body, or both together, but in the rectitude or due temperament of our nature in general. And indeed holiness, properly so called, is nothing else but that pure and excellent frame or disposition of the whole man, whereby all the faculties of the soul, and members of the body, are reduced to their primitive constitution, and become such as God at first made, and would still have them to be; exerting themselves in their respective places and offices, according to those rules which He hath set them. So that to our “perfecting holiness,” as the Apostle speaks, “in the fear of God,” there is required a right and clear understanding, a sound judgment, a pure heart, an obedient will, a good conscience, and regular affections, placed every one upon its proper objects, in a due manner. And wheresoever the soul (if I may so speak) is thus all of a piece, all over such as God would have it to be, and so agreeable to His Divine will, there is true holiness; and such a one may be truly said to be holy, yea, to be holy as God is Holy, as being pure and excellent according to his finite capacity, as God Himself is in His infinite perfections. [2 Cor. 7.  
1.]

Now, the true notion of holiness or sanctity being thus briefly stated, we may easily understand what kind of persons those be, which are here called Saints. For, in order to a man’s being a true Saint, he must first have so much knowledge of God and Christ, as is necessary to the possessing of his mind with a due sense of His Divine Majesty, and with right apprehensions of the great mystery of our Salvation by Jesus Christ. He must have a sound judgment in all things, especially in the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, and in all the necessary duties required in the Gospel: he must have a pure and sincere heart, in believing all those articles as revealed, and in performing all such duties as required by God: he must have a good conscience, “a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards men:” he must have a pliable and obedient will, ready upon all occasions to choose whatsoever his understanding, rightly informed, dictates to be good, and to refuse whatsoever he apprehends to be evil: he must keep his affections all in their proper order, fixed constantly upon [Acts 24.  
16.]



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such objects which they were at first fitted and designed for: he must hate, abhor, and shun all manner of sin, upon that account only because it is sin, or the transgression of God's Law, and be heartily troubled that he was ever guilty of it: he must love God with all his heart and soul, and so above all things in the world besides: he must bear no grudge, hatred, malice, or ill-will against any person upon earth, but love his neighbour as himself: he must "hunger and thirst after righteousness," and desire nothing so much as to serve and please God, and so to have His love and favour, whatsoever it costs him: he must not "fear them which can kill the body, but Him only Who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell:" he must trust in the Lord with all his heart, and support himself under all the circumstances and occurrences of this life, with an humble confidence of His goodness and mercy in Jesus Christ: he must "rejoice in the Lord always," both when he hath, and when he hath not any thing else to rejoice in: he must be sober and temperate, meek and humble, gentle and peaceable, faithful to his word, true to his friend, loving to his enemy, charitable to the poor, kind and merciful, and just to all. In brief, he must be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing that his labour is not vain in the Lord.

[Matt. 5.  
6.][Matt. 10.  
28.]

[Phil. 4. 4.]

1 Cor. 15.  
58.]

II. And that he may be sure of; for he who hath attained to such an excellent temper as this is, is certainly a real and true Saint, and therefore shall as certainly partake of that transcendent happiness, which is here called "the inheritance of the Saints in light." It is called an inheritance, or the word signifies also, 'a lot,' in allusion to that type of Heaven, the land of Canaan, which was divided among all the children of Israel by lot, and is all along in the Old Testament called their inheritance. And so certainly is Heaven, in a proper and literal sense, the inheritance of the Saints: for they being all regenerate and born again of God, are properly His children; and, as the Apostle rightly argues, "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." So that all the Saints or sons of God, in whatsoever age or place they were born again, from the beginning to the end of the world, they are all co-heirs, and so

Rom. 8. 17.]

have an equal right and title to this inheritance ; not only to some part of it, but to the whole, and all and every one of them equally possess it all : it is not like an earthly inheritance, that is divided among the co-heirs, some taking one part of it, and some another ; but every one that hath any share in this heavenly inheritance, enjoys it all himself, as much as if he was the sole heir, and there was none else to partake of it but himself.

Neither are the Saints joint-heirs only with one another, but, as the Apostle there speaks, with Christ Himself ; and if so, their inheritance must needs be very large, for “ Christ Heb. 1. 2. is appointed heir of all things.” And if they be joint-heirs with Him, as be sure they are, every one of them must inherit all things too as He doth. And so be sure they do ; for God Himself asserts it, saying, “ He that overcometh, Rev. 21. 7. shall inherit all things ; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son.” Where we may observe both the vast extent of this inheritance of the Saints, and likewise the reason of it. As to its extent, it is not confined to a parish, or county, or kingdom upon earth ; no, not to the whole earth, nor to the moon, nor sun, nor to any star, nor to all the stars of Heaven, nor to the whole Heavens where they are, nor yet to the greatest part of the creation, but extends itself to the whole : for they “ inherit all things ;” all things that are good or amiable, all things that are pleasing or delightful, all things that are necessary or convenient for them, all things they can desire or hope for, all things they can love or take comfort in, all things that can any way contribute to their happiness, as all things in the whole world shall do one way or other.

For, even while they are upon earth, all things work together for their good, how much more when they come to [Rom. 8. 28.] Heaven ! Where they shall clearly see, how all things that ever happened to them through the whole course of their lives, concurred to bring them thither ; and so will be matter of joy and comfort to them when they are there : by which means, they will then take pleasure, not only in all the devotions, alms, and good works they ever performed, but likewise in all the losses, crosses, and disappointments, pains, sicknesses, and troubles of all sorts that ever befel them ; yea, and in all things that God ever made, or did, or suffered

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1 Cor. 3. 21,  
22.

to be done in the world : for all things are theirs, even while they are here below, as St. Paul assures the Saints at Corinth, saying, “ All things are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours.” All things are settled upon them at their new birth, and when they come to full age, that is, as soon as they get to Heaven, they will have the actual possession of all things, and then must needs enjoy whatsoever any thing in the world can afford them. And what is there in the world, but what affords the Saints in Heaven something to delight and please them ? The Heaven of Heavens affords them most commodious and pleasant mansions ; all the holy Angels there afford them their most agreeable company and conversation ; all the Devils and damned in Hell afford them matter of praise and thankfulness to God, that they are not there ; all the glorious lights in the firmament afford them a most delicious prospect. In short, all the animals, and plants, and earths, and stones, and metals, and minerals, and whatsoever God ever made, either in Heaven or earth, afford them a clear and perfect view of His Divine perfections ; which cannot but affect their hearts with the highest transports of joy and wonder.

[Rev. 21.  
7.]

Thus doth every Saint in Heaven inherit all things, all things are his ; and it is no marvel, for God Himself is his, as it follows in the place before quoted : “ He shall inherit all things ; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son.” “ He shall be My son,” that is the reason he is an heir ; “ I will be his God,” that is the reason that he inherits all things : for he who hath Him that hath all things, cannot but have all things in Him ; yea, infinitely more than all things else ; all things that God hath made being in a manner nothing in comparison of Him that made them : Who therefore, to complete the happiness of His Saints, doth not only give them all He hath, but even Himself too, saying, “ I will be their God,” or rather, as the words signify, “ I will be God to them.” By virtue of which promise they enjoy not only whatsoever God hath made or done, but likewise whatsoever He is, even all those infinite, eternal, incomprehensible perfections which are concentrated in Him.

But here I must confess myself at a loss, not knowing how to conceive, much less to express, either how the Saints in Heaven enjoy God, or how great an happiness that is to them; only in general we know they see God face to face, as not only St. Paul, but likewise St. John acquaints us, saying, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be! But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." <sup>1 Cor. 13. 12.</sup> <sup>1 John 3. 2.</sup>

From whence it is evident, that they see God, not only as manifesting Himself in His creatures, but as He is in Himself: which blessed sight must needs fill them with the highest joys their finite nature is able to bear; to see wisdom, and power, and greatness, and goodness, and justice, and mercy, and immensity, and eternity; to see the Lord of Hosts, the chiefest, the only good; to see God Himself unveiling Himself, and shining forth in all His glory before them; yea, to see Him smiling, as it were, upon them, rejoicing over them, demeaning Himself as well pleased with them! Who is able to conceive how much their blessed souls are affected, delighted, transported with this blessed sight? None certainly, but only they that have it. They know, yea, they feel it to be the greatest, the only perfect happiness they can possibly enjoy; and that all things else could never satisfy their desires, and so make them happy, without this: whereas, this would do it without all things else; it being impossible for them to desire any thing, but what they have in God, infinite goodness itself. In Whom, by consequence, all their inclinations meet as in their proper center; and so their minds are always at rest and quiet, and their souls full as they can hold of solid and substantial joy; which makes them break forth continually into praises and hallelujahs to Almighty God, and to the Lamb that sitteth upon the throne, Who purchased such a glorious inheritance as this is for them, and settled it upon them for evermore.

But how can these things be? How is it possible for the Saints in Heaven to see God? To that the Apostle answers in my text, by calling it the inheritance of the Saints in light. It is true, all men are born at first spiritually blind,



SERM. II. and so generally live in the dark, seeing no more of God or any spiritual object, than as if there was no such thing in being. But when a man is born again, his eyes are opened, and he is "turned from darkness to light," as well as "from the power of Satan unto God." And therefore all such are called the "children of light," and "the children of the day," because they have "a marvellous light (as St. Peter calls it) constantly shining in them," whereby they discover many glorious things which lie perfectly hid to all other mortals. By this Elisha's servant, when his eyes were opened, "saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire," even a whole legion of the Heavenly host round about his Master. By this St. Stephen "saw the Heavens opened, and Christ standing at the right-hand of God;" yea, by this "Moses saw Him that is invisible," God Himself. And thus all that are real Saints, being the children of light, see more or less of God; at least, so much as to make them love, and desire, and fear, and trust on Him above all things in the world. Indeed they cannot see His face and live, as He Himself told Moses; but they see Him as Moses did, in His back parts, in His works, the effects and products of His Divine perfections. And the reason why they cannot see His face, and live in this world, is, because they are still in their imperfect state, and therefore cannot possibly have a perfect sight of so glorious a Being; or if they had, it would strike them dead, for they could not possibly bear it; or, as Job expresseth it, "By reason of His Highness they could not endure," so as to live under it. But seeing God Himself said, that no man shall see His face and live, He thereby gives us to understand, that some shall see His face when they are dead, and departed out of this life.

And so, questionless, do all the Saints that are in Heaven; for they live in a city "which hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof;" or as the Prophet Isaiah words it, "The Lord is to them an everlasting light." So that, as the sun is to us upon earth the fountain of all that light whereby we see any object here below, so to the Saints that are above in Heaven, God Himself is pleased to issue forth light immediately from

Himself, which exceeds the light of the sun infinitely more than that exceeds the glimmering of a glowworm. Neither doth it only shine as the sun doth, upon them, but into them, and so enlightens themselves too, as well as all things that are about them. And what is there in the world which they cannot see by such a glorious, such an infinite Light as this is? By this light they see not only the superficies, but the very substance and contexture of every creature they have a mind to look upon, as exactly as if it was perfectly anatomized and laid open before them: by this they see the several virtues, qualities, and operations of things here below, and the great ends and purposes for which they are designed: by this they see the causes of the ebbing and flowing of the sea, and other great phænomena of nature, which so much puzzle philosophy, and make it but a mere conjecture: by this they see the secret and wonderful power that God hath put into all animals and vegetables, of propagating their respective species, so that none of them ever did, or can ever fail to be in the world: by this they see both the composition and the several motions of the sun, and all the other planets, as well as fixed stars, and what influences they have upon terrestrial bodies: by this they see the wise establishment of second causes, how they depend upon one another, and all upon the first. The sight of which, and suchlike things, must needs be an extraordinary pleasure to them, by reason of the most admirable art and contrivance they observe in them; and also because their faculties are by this means employed to the proper uses for which they were made, and to which they therefore tend: for as God made all things for the manifestation of His Own glory, He endued men with reason, on purpose that they might behold and admire the glory of those perfections which He manifested in them. And hence it is, that (all things naturally tending to their end) all men naturally desire to know, and many apply their minds wholly to find out such things as those are; and if they can but guess at any of them with the least show of reason, or so much as probability, they are mightily pleased with it. But what a pleasure then must it be to have a full view and prospect of them, and of that infinite wisdom, power, and goodness

[Prov. 16. 4.]

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which appeareth in them; as the Saints in Heaven have by that Light which shines upon their inheritance.

Moreover, by this Light they look back upon their former lives, and see the steady hand of Providence ordering and overruling, not only the greater occurrences, but even the least circumstances in them, and the Holy Spirit of God making some use or other of every one of them, to work them over to Himself. By this they see God's infinite love and goodness to His Church militant here on earth, in all the straits and difficulties He brings it into; and how good and necessary it is for it, that every thing should be just as it is.

By this they see the Holy Angels and all their fellow-citizens in the new Hierusalem, and converse familiarly with them, as we do with one another: by this they see their ever-blessed Saviour, the Eternal Son of God, in their nature, exalted at the right hand of the Father, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named in Heaven or earth: by this they see all the glory which the Father hath given Him, as He Himself once prayed they might. Yea, by this they see the Most High God face to face, even as we see the sun by his own light; and that too, as clearly, as fully, as perfectly, as it is possible for creatures to do it: which so refreshes, enlivens, elevates, and cheers their spirits, that they are always rejoicing, and singing, and praising God; admiring, adoring, magnifying, and giving thanks to His almighty, all-glorious, and all-gracious Majesty, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for His creating, redeeming, and sanctifying them, so as to bring them through the various changes and chances of this mortal life, to such an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; eternal in the Heavens, in glory, in bliss, in light itself.

And now we are got upon the Mount, how well may we say with the Apostles, "it is good for us to be here!" Let us set up our tents, and dwell continually upon the contemplation of this glorious inheritance of the Saints in light. But, alas! how far as yet are we distant from it! how unworthy of it! how unmeet for it! What a deal of work have we to do before we can get thither! But, blessed be

[Eph. 1.  
21.]

John 17. 24.

[1 Pet. 1. 4.]

Matt. 17. 4.

God, we are in the ready way, living in such a Church wherein we have all things that can be desired in order to it: let us not then despair, but use the utmost of our care, and study to qualify ourselves aright for it, and we cannot miss of it.

III. For which purpose, therefore, let us consider in the next place, how we may be rightly qualified, or, as the Apostle here speaks, “made meet” to be partakers of this inheritance of the Saints in light.

Where we may observe by the way, that the Apostle here supposeth, or rather takes it for granted, that all men are not meet for it. Than which nothing can be more certain, none being meet to partake of the inheritance of the Saints, but only they who are Saints themselves; God Himself hath excluded all others from it, by His eternal and irrevocable decree, that “without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.” Heb. 12. 14. And indeed, none but Saints are subjects capable of it; for all others being still in their natural and sinful estate, their minds are so stuffed with vicious and gross humours, that they cannot see the light; and so wholly inclined and bent upon sensual objects, that they can take no pleasure in the joys of Heaven: but rather, being altogether unclean and carnal, they have an utter aversion, if not an antipathy, against such pure and spiritual delights, as being directly contrary to their corrupt nature: insomuch, that Heaven itself would seem more like Hell than Heaven to them; the place would seem melancholy, the company irksome, the work tedious, the light troublesome, every thing uneasy and disagreeable.

As, suppose it should please Almighty God to take us all up immediately from this place into the highest Heavens, and there set us all just at our Saviour’s elbow; all such who are real Saints among us, who love God above all things, how glad would they be to see Him they love, to see their Saviour shining in all His glory! How suddenly would they strike up with the Choir of Heaven, in singing forth the praises of Him that brought them thither! What infinite pleasure would they take in the place, the work, the company, and every thing they see there! But as for others who are still in their sins, and mind only earthly



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things, how sad and disconsolate would they be! They would wonder to see the Saints so pleasant and joyful; for as for their parts, they can see nothing there which they care for; in the midst of light, they would be still in darkness; in sorrow in the midst of joys: they cannot hear that heavenly music; or, if they did, it would sound harsh, all discord to them; they cannot taste of those spiritual dainties; or, if they did, they could not relish, nor find any sweetness in them; they cannot see the face of God; or, if they did, they would not be pleased, but terrified and confounded at it, and wish with all their souls to be out of that sad place again, that they might mind the business, and enjoy the pleasures they like better. If that be Heaven, they never desire to come there any more; and all because they want that principle of true grace and holiness, which should make them Saints, and so capacitate them for the enjoyment of those holy pleasures, without which a blind man may as well delight in pictures, the deaf in music, yea, a brute beast in metaphysics, as they in Heaven, or in God Himself.

By this, therefore, we may see how necessary it is to be holy, before we can be happy; pure in heart, before we can see God; real and true Saints, before we can partake of their inheritance in light; and by consequence, as ever we desire to go to Heaven when we die, we must take care, while we live, to get our hearts purged from all corrupt affections, our minds enlightened, and our souls sanctified throughout, and inclined wholly unto God, so as to prefer Him at least in some degree before all things else; that so we may go out of this world rightly disposed and fitted to behold the light of His countenance, and to solace ourselves in it, as the highest object of our soul's desires. And then we may be sure that our desires shall be fully satisfied; for our souls will be no sooner loosened from our bodies, but they will be immediately carried up to Heaven, and there partake of the inheritance of the Saints in light; and at the last day, our bodies shall be united to our souls again, and then both in soul and body we shall enjoy all we can desire for evermore.

But who is sufficient for these things? How can we who

were born, and have lived so long in sin, ever be made so pure and holy, as to be meet to live with Saints and Angels, with Christ and God Himself, in the world to come? It is, I confess, no easy matter; but, howsoever, it is possible for every one here present to be so; nay, more than that, none of us can fail of it, unless we be failing to ourselves in our endeavours after it: as we may easily perceive, if we do but consider how others have been, and so how we ourselves may be sanctified or made Saints, if we do but set ourselves in good earnest about it.

IV. For which end we may observe, that this being too great a work for us to do by our own strength, the eternal Son of God Himself was pleased to undertake it for us. And for that purpose, having taken our nature upon Him, He gave Himself for us, as to redeem us from all iniquity, so “to purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” And so He is made to us, Wisdom, as well as Righteousness, Sanctification as well as Redemption. That, as we are justified and redeemed from our sins, so we may be made wise and holy through Him, Who is the Fountain, as of all the good things we do or can enjoy, so likewise of all the goodness and virtue we are or can be endued with. It all flows from Him; Who therefore tells us, that “with-  
out Him we can do nothing,” but by Him there is nothing but we can do; as St. Paul found by experience, saying, “I  
can do all things through Christ Which strengtheneth me.”

Tit. 2. 14.

1 Cor. 1. 30.

John 15. 5.

Phil. 4. 13.

Hence, therefore, if we desire to be made holy, we must apply ourselves to Christ, Who, although He be now in Heaven as to His human nature, yet He is always present with us here below, both in His Divine Person, and also by His Holy Spirit; and so is ready upon all occasions to assist us in our endeavours after piety, and to crown them with that success, as to make us sincerely pious. For which purpose, as He sanctified our human nature in general by assuming it into his Divine person, so He sanctifieth our human persons in particular, by making us partakers of His Divine nature; which He doth by sending His Holy Spirit, of the same Divine nature with Himself, into our hearts, which by degrees makes us also holy and spiritual, and so

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Now the great thing which He requires of us, in order to His doing this great work for us, is, that we believe in Him; for He Himself saith, that we are "sanctified by faith that is in Him." Not by believing only His Gospel in general to be true, but by believing particularly in Himself, so as to have a sure trust and confidence on Him, to give us such illuminations and assistances of His Holy Spirit, whereby we may be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, and so be made sincerely, as He is infinitely, pure and holy. And, indeed, this is the first and great thing we ought to believe and trust in our Saviour for, and that which is the foundation of all our other expectations from Him: for we have no ground to expect either pardon, or any other blessing at His hands, until we repent and be converted. But if we firmly believe and depend upon Him, in the first place, for grace to repent and turn to God, and so become holy and new creatures, according to the promises that He hath made us to that purpose; as He will then most certainly perform such promises to us, so all the other blessings that He hath purchased for us, will then follow in course: for if we be truly sanctified and made holy, then our sins will be all pardoned, our persons justified, our duties accepted, God reconciled to us, and at length our souls eternally saved: but all these things depend upon our being first sanctified by Him, as that doth upon our believing in Him.

Eph. 2. 8. But faith, as the Apostle saith, "is the gift of God." And therefore, if we desire to believe, so as to be sanctified, we must ask and expect it from Him, in the use of those means which He hath appointed, both for the begetting and increasing of it; we must read, and hear, and meditate upon His Holy Word; we must fast and pray, and receive the Sacrament of our Lord's Supper; for these are the ordinary means which God hath established in His Church, whereby to make known Himself unto us, to convince us of the truth and certainty of His promises, and so work and confirm in us a true belief of them, by the power of the Holy Ghost,

which for that purpose doth continually assist and influence the administration and performance of such duties; which, therefore, are not only holy duties in themselves, but the means too, whereby we may become holy.

But, for that purpose, we must perform not only one or more, but all of them, so as to go through the whole course that God hath prescribed for the healing of our spiritual distempers, and for the restoring us to a sound frame and constitution of mind, wherein, as I have shewn, the nature of true holiness properly consists.

And that we must do too, not only now and then, but through the whole course of our lives, so as to be constantly, as much as possibly we can, employed in some or other of these holy exercises; not in a careless and superficial manner, but heartily, sincerely, earnestly, as for our lives; for our lives, our eternal lives, in a great measure depend upon it: for it is by our continual exercise of those holy duties, and the grace of God always accompanying of them, that our hearts are insensibly taken off from sin and the world, and raised up higher and higher towards God and Heaven, until at length our whole soul being sanctified by a quick and lively faith in Christ, we are "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light."

And what cause have they, who are so, to give thanks, as St. Paul here doth, to God the Father for it! for the whole of our Salvation, from first to last, must be ascribed unto Him: it is begun, continued, and ended all in Him; for it was He "Who so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." It was He "Who spared not" this "His Son, but delivered Him up," to be tempted, to be scourged, to be spit upon, to be arraigned, condemned, crucified, and all for us and our Salvation. It was He, Who "having raised up this His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless us, by turning every one of us from his iniquities;" "and made Him, Who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." It was He "Who hath exalted Him with His Own right hand, to be both a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance and remission of sins." It is He Who hath passed by the greatest part of



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mankind, and hath revealed Himself and His Son to us, the unworthiest of all His creatures : it was He Who caused us to be born and bred within the pale of His Holy Catholic Church, and in one of the soundest and purest parts of it upon the face of the whole earth : it is He Who still continues the means of grace to us, and us to them, and His blessing both to them and us : it is He Who gives us His Holy Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and to quicken us with newness of life ; to raise up our minds from the world, and fix them upon Himself ; to keep us from evil, and to enable us to do or suffer any thing we can for His sake : it is He Who calls upon us continually, by the ministry of His Word, to repent and believe the Gospel, and gives us grace to do it. In a word, it is He Who hath sent me, the unworthiest of all His ministers, at this time, to acquaint you in His Name, how ye may be “ meet partakers of the inheritance of the saints in Light ;” and it is He alone can make you so.

Rev. 7. 10-  
12.

And therefore all, who are so made, may well join with the Choir of Heaven, in those seraphic anthems we find them singing in the Revelation ; “ Salvation to our God Which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.”

## SERMON III.

Preached before the House of Peers, in the Abbey Church of Westminster, on  
Sunday, November 5, 1704.

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ESTHER, ix. 27, 28.

*The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their appointed time, every year ;*  
*And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city ; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the remembrance of them perish from their seed.*

As God made all things at first, so He still doth all things for Himself, for His Own honour and glory. And therefore He hath made several creatures, as the Angels in Heaven and upon earth men, capable of reflecting upon what He doth, and of discerning, acknowledging, and admiring those infinite perfections which He sheweth forth in doing it, and so of giving Him the praise and honour that is due unto Him for it: which therefore He requireth all men to do. And for that purpose, it hath been usual in all ages to appoint some certain times and seasons wherein to do it, not only privately, every one by himself, but publicly, and in a body, many meeting and joining together, for no other end, but to own and celebrate the wonderful works that God hath done, and to testify and declare the same by all such outward acts by which we are said to worship Him.

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As we do this day: upon which, therefore, it may be proper to consider, first, in general, what grounds we have to believe that it is agreeable to the will of God, and by consequence, acceptable to Him, that some days be set apart, whereon to recognise and keep up the memory of His works, such especially, as seem greater than ordinary; and then to apply it particularly to that which gave occasion to our present meeting, from the words which I have now read.

For which purpose, we may first observe, that God, if He had pleased, could have put all things into the course and order they are now in, at the same moment wherein He produced them altogether out of nothing, by His word. But He was pleased to make it the work of six days, and to tell us what He did particularly upon each of those days, that we might be better able to apprehend and celebrate His infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, in the whole, and in every part of it. And having finished this great work, and settled the whole chain of subordinate causes, which He designed to make use of for the bringing about ordinary effects, in six days, and then resting or ceasing to do any more such works on the seventh, He blessed and sanctified that day, that men in all ages might set apart every seventh day from all other business, to contemplate upon what He did in six, and to adore and laud Him for it. And when He was pleased afterwards to act without, or beyond the order of things which He at first established, He still required, that the time wherein He did so should be religiously observed every year, in memory of what He then did.

As when, by many signs and wonders, he had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, upon the fourteenth day of the first month, He commanded them to keep that day every year throughout their generations, by an ordinance for ever, and gave them several rules and laws for the better observation of it, that they might never forget the power and goodness which He shewed them upon that extraordinary occasion, but should praise and magnify His Name for it every year, as long as they should continue to be His people: for which reason, also, He called this feast the Pass-over, to put them in mind of His extraordinary favour, in passing over their houses when He destroyed the Egyptians.

Exod. 12.  
14, 17.

And having by the ministry of Angels proclaimed His law upon Mount Sinai, in a miraculous manner, seven weeks, or forty-nine days after the first Passover, when the harvest began in the land of Canaan, whither He was leading His people; He ordained the Feast of Weeks, called the Pentecost, as being the fiftieth day from the Passover, to be strictly observed every year, that they might always remember the great things He had then done for them.

And seeing He led them, and fed them with miracles forty years together in the wilderness, where they lived all the while in booths or tabernacles, He commanded them to leave their houses, and to dwell in tabernacles seven days every year, from the fifteenth day of the seventh month, which is therefore called the Feast of Tabernacles: the reason of which institution He Himself is pleased to give in these words; "Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt."

Levit. 23.  
42, 43.

These are the three great yearly feasts instituted by God Himself, at which all the males among His people were commanded to appear before Him, in the place which He should choose; and none were to appear before Him empty, but every one was to bring, according to his ability, something as an acknowledgment of God's special grace and favour, vouchsafed upon that occasion.

Deut. 16.  
16, 17.  
Exod. 23.  
14, 15, 17.

To these He added the first day of every month, called the New Moon, and especially the first day of Tisri, the first month of their civil (though the seventh of their sacred) year, called the Feast of Trumpets; on which days He commanded more than ordinary sacrifices to be offered, as a memorial of His goodness to them, in preserving them in the month or year that was past, and to implore the same favour in that which was to come. So great care did He take, that His people might always remember what He did for them, and thank Him for it, as the great end for which He did it.

Numb. 28.  
11.  
chap. 29. 1.  
Lev. 23. 24.

But the most High God knowing how prone His people would be to transgress these and all His other laws, He



SERM. III. enjoined them also one yearly fast, on the tenth day of the seventh month, about our September, called the Day of Expiation; on which they were not only to abstain from all manner of food, but likewise to afflict their souls; that is, to humble themselves, by repentance and mortification, for all the sins they had committed against Him. This is the fast spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles, where it is said, that "sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now past."

Lev. 16. 29. chap. 23. 27.

Acts 27. 9.

Now, it having pleased Almighty God Himself thus to ordain several feasts, and a fast, to be observed every year for the purposes before mentioned, His Church and people, in all ages, have from thence concluded, as they well might, that it is His Divine will and pleasure, that when He sheweth them any extraordinary favour, the day on which He did it should be yearly observed, to keep up the memory of it, and to render Him the thanks and praise which is due unto Him, as the author and giver of it: and when He lays any public and extraordinary judgment upon them for their sins, the day on which it was executed should be every year devoted to fasting and prayer, to shew their repentance for the sins whereby they had incurred His displeasure in such an extraordinary manner, and to supplicate His Divine Majesty never to inflict any more such punishments upon them.

And accordingly, we read of four anniversary fasts observed in the Prophet Zechariah's time, the fast of the fourth, the fifth, the seventh, and the tenth months. The fast of the tenth month, or Tebeth, was kept every year upon the tenth day of the month, about our December, because the city of Hierusalem began that day to be besieged by Nebuchadnezzar. The fast of the fourth month, about our June, on the seventeenth day, because the city was then broken up, and the daily sacrifice ceased, the Law was burnt, and an idol set up in the Temple. The fast of the fifth month, the tenth day, because the temple was that day burnt. The fast of the seventh month, the third day, because Gedaliah was that day treacherously slain by Ishmael and his confederates; upon which there fell so many and great troubles upon them, that they have celebrated the memory of it ever since. For all these four fasts,

Zech. 8. 19.

2 Kings 25. 1.

Jer. 52. 4.

ch. 39. 2.

ch. 52. 6, 7.

ch. 52. 12.

2 Kings 25. 22.

Jer. 41. 1.

though they were not of Divine, but only of human institution, yet there being just cause for their being instituted, they were allowed of by the Prophets, and religiously observed by the people for many ages, even to this day ; for we find all these anniversary feasts and fasts still kept up in their calendar, with many other, too many to be now insisted on.

Besides these yearly fasts, there were too weekly, Monday and Thursday ; which they pretend were instituted by Ezra : Thursday, in memory of Moses's going up the second time to the Mount upon that day of the week, and the other in memory of his coming down again, upon a Monday forty days after. These are the fasts mentioned Luke xviii. 12.

These were all the public fasts, observed generally by all sorts of people under the Law : besides which, there were many other commonly observed among them, at least by particular sects ; as appears from that question propounded to our Saviour, " Why do the Disciples of John fast often, Luke 5. 33. and make prayers, and likewise the Disciples of the Pharisees ; but thine eat and drink ? " To which our Saviour's answer is very remarkable ; " Can ye," saith He, " make ver. 34, 35. the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them ? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast in those days." As if He had said, ' So long as I am here with My Disciples, they have no cause to fast or mourn, but rather to rejoice and praise God for My presence with them. But the days will come, when I shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast in those days. There shall then be days of fasting appointed in My Church, as there have been hitherto in that of the Jews, especially those days wherein I shall be taken from them.'

And then He farther explains His meaning by a parable, how " no man putteth a piece of an old garment to a new ; " ch. 5. 36-38. the old not agreeing with the new : nor is " new wine to be put into old bottles, but new ; " that " both may be preserved." Whereby He shews, that the old fasts which the Jews had hitherto received, would not suit with His new religion ; but that there should be new days and occasions of fasting now appointed, suitable to His institutions, that so both the duty of fasting and His religion may be kept

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Luke 5. 39.

up: which could not be by those fasts which had been hitherto observed. And then He adds, “No man also having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better.” As if He had said, ‘My Disciples having been used to the old fasts, would not presently like any other, but would prefer the old before them; but when My religion shall be established in the world, they will then see occasion to ordain and observe other fasts, agreeable to the same; and then shall they fast in those days.’

Now, from these things thus briefly premised, we may see what firm ground there is in the Word of God, for setting apart some certain days every year, for days of feasting or fasting; especially such as are appointed by our Church, which are all exactly accommodated to the religion which Christ hath revealed to the world, and have been all along observed by His Catholic Church militant here on earth, almost ever since He was taken from it: except three only which are peculiar to our Church and nation, the thirtieth of January, the twenty-ninth of May, and that which we now celebrate; all settled by act of parliament, as the other are. And to justify the wisdom of our nation, in setting apart these days, for the holy purposes designed by them, it is much to be observed, that there are precedents for them all in the Scripture itself.

2 Chron. 35.  
24, 25.

As for the first, it is written, that when that pious and virtuous Prince Josiah, king of Judah, was slain in an engagement with Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, “All Judah and Hierusalem mourned for Josiah: And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah; and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day.” “To this day,” that is, to the time that this Book of Chronicles was written; which is generally believed to be done by Ezra, who lived about one hundred and fifty years after Josiah’s death. So that his death was commemorated and lamented at least all that time; and that too, by a law made for that purpose: for it follows in the text, “And they made them an ordinance in Israel; and behold they are written in the Lamentations.” They who had the legislative power then in their hands, made, it seems, an ordinance; or, as the word is usually translated, a statute or

law for it: a law so agreeable to the will of God, that it was approved of by His Prophet Jeremiah; who himself also, for the better observation of it, seems to have drawn up his Book of Lamentations, for a service, as it were, to be said or sung upon that mournful occasion.

Here, then, we have a precedent of Divine authority, for making a law to commemorate the death of such an excellent prince as Josiah was. And such was King Charles I., a king as like Josiah in his zeal for God, and in all manner of virtue and good works, as any that ever swayed the sceptre of this or any other kingdom. And as his life was like Josiah's, his death was much more to be lamented: for Josiah died by the hand of a foreign enemy in the heat of battle; King Charles was murdered by his own subjects, in such a manner, that the whole nation had but too much cause to make a law, that the day on which it was done should be every year observed, throughout the kingdom, as a day of fasting and humiliation.

And there is, doubtless, as much reason for the keeping, as there was for the making this law: this being the most proper means whereby to avert, if it be possible, the judgments which otherwise may still be justly inflicted upon the nation for it; and to put us always in mind to take care of those seditious principles, which lead to such execrable practices; and also that our most gracious Sovereign, whom God preserve, and her successors in all ages, may sit easy on the throne, not fearing that any such wicked attempts will be ever any more made upon their sacred persons, seeing their subjects every year in such a solemn manner, before God Himself, express their utter detestation of, and their humiliation for, what was then done.

As we have the foresaid precedent in the Jewish Church, for keeping the thirtieth day of January as a day of fasting for the murder of King Charles I., we have another for our celebrating the twenty-ninth of May, in memory of the Restoration of King Charles II. For when Judas Maccabæus had repaired the sanctuary and altar at Hierusalem, which had been for some years desolate and profaned, and so had restored the religion established by God in that nation, and in some measure the civil government too; and



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1 Maccab. 4.  
36, 52, 59.  
2 Mac. 10.  
5, 6, 8.

John 10. 22.  
23.

having begun, upon the twenty-fifth day of their month Casleu, to offer sacrifices, according to the law, upon the new altar of burnt-offerings; he, with his brethren and the whole congregation of Israel ordained, that the days of the dedication of the altar should be kept in their season from year to year, for the space of eight days, from the said twenty-fifth of Casleu, about our November. Which feast is therefore called *Encania*, the Feast of Dedication, or, as the word properly signifies, the Feast of Restoration; because their new altar was then dedicated, and so their ancient religion restored. And that this feast was kept in our Saviour's time, appears, in that He Himself was at Hierusalem at that, as well as at their other feasts; for it is written, "And it was at Hierusalem the Feast of the Dedication, and it was winter: And Jesus walked in the Temple." And though this feast was ordained, in a time when there was no Prophet in Israel, and therefore could not be of Divine institution; yet, nevertheless, as our Saviour Himself signified His approbation of it, by His being present at it, and hath caused that also to be recorded, that His Church in all ages might take notice of it, so it is as constantly observed by the Jews to this day, as any that were instituted by God Himself.

And whosoever impartially considers all the circumstances of it, will see, that our King, Lords, and Commons, had the same reason to enjoin the twenty-ninth of May to be kept every year as a day of thanksgiving, as Judas and his brethren had for their day of restoration; and that it always ought to be observed, as well as theirs, as being the day on which God was pleased of His especial grace and favour to bring home our then dread Sovereign, King Charles II., thereby restoring to us the public and free profession of His true religion and worship, to the great comfort and joy of our hearts; as it is expressed in the service for the day.

And so we come to the day we now celebrate, in memory of God's deliverance of this Church and kingdom from the Papists' conspiracy, intended to be executed upon this day, the fifth of November. Which was such a conspiracy, and such a deliverance, that the like is scarce to met with in any

history, sacred or profane, except in this Book of Esther ; where we have also a clear precedent for making a law for the public and solemn commemoration of such a deliverance every year, in these words : “ The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their appointed time every year : and that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city ; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the remembrance of them perish from their seed.”

For here we find an ordinance or law made for a festival or day of thanksgiving, to be observed by all Jews, every year, throughout all ages, called the Feast of Purim. The occasion in short was this ; Haman, being highly preferred by King Ahasuerus, was so incensed against Mordecai the Jew, for not bowing to him as other people did, that for his sake he designed to destroy all the Jews that were in all the empire, reaching from India to Ethiopia ; and for that purpose, he cast a sort of lot, called “ Pur,” according to the superstitious conceits of those times, to find out which was the most lucky day in all the year whereon to bring about his design : and the lot falling at last upon the thirteenth day of Adar, the last month in the Jewish year, he procured the king’s decree, that all the Jews in his dominions, consisting of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, should be destroyed on that day.

But, before that day came, God had so ordered it, that the king’s mind was altered, Haman disgraced and hanged, Mordecai advanced, the former decree revoked, and another granted, that the Jews might defend themselves, and with the assistance of the magistrates and officers, in every province, destroy all that were ready to destroy them ; which they accordingly began to do upon the foresaid thirteenth day of Adar, the day on which they were to have been destroyed. And their deliverance being perfected, in some places on the fourteenth, in others on the fifteenth day of the said month, they agreed among themselves and ordained, that those two days should be kept every year, as days of

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Esth. 9. 20,  
21.  
vers. 29, 32.

feasting and gladness, and called Purim, from Pur, the lot before spoken of; which being established by Mordecai, and confirmed by Queen Esther, this feast hath been accordingly observed ever since, and is to this day, by all Jews, wheresoever they live in any part of the earth.

And it may not be impertinent to observe, that although this feast also was established only by human authority, yet it was so well approved of by God, that the history of it is, by His inspiration, made part of the Canonical Scriptures, that all generations might be certified of the great deliverance which He then wrought for His people; and that the foresaid feast was instituted on purpose to perpetuate the memory of it.

And certainly we have as much reason to keep the fifth of November, as they had for their feast of Purim, our deliverance from the Papists being every way as remarkable as theirs from Haman's conspiracy; and, in many respects, as like it as if it had been copied from it; but so that, in some things, the copy exceeded the original.

Haman was a long while contriving which day of the year was best for accomplishing his design; so were the Papists, till at length they thought, as he did, that they had found out a lucky day; a day whereon the king and the whole three states of the realm were to meet together in one room: for then it was only putting good store of gunpowder under that room, and blowing it up while they were in it, and the work would be done; not only in one day, as Haman's, but in one moment of that day.

Esth. 3. 13.  
ch. 4. 13.

And as Haman's design was not to destroy some particular persons only, but the whole body of the Jews, dispersed all over that vast empire, without any distinction of age, or sex, or quality, not excepting the "queen herself," so here, the king, the queen, the prince, the nobility and gentry, even the whole body of the nation assembled in parliament, were designed to be cut off at one blow. What a dreadful blow would that have been to this nation, if it had been given! Many of the nobility and the gentry, which are now so serviceable to their sovereign and their country, could never have been so; for they would never have been born; yea, it is much to be feared, that England would never have been

blessed with such a sovereign as we now have: for though her royal grandfather, of ever-blessed memory, was then too young to be present at that parliament, yet it can scarce be doubted, but that he also, some way or other, would have been taken off and martyred before his time.

But there is one thing wherein this so far exceeded Haman's conspiracy, that there is no comparison between them for wickedness and cruelty; for his was open and bare-faced, divulged and known all over the empire long before it was to be executed; whereby the Jews had time to make what interest they could to prevent it, or to provide for their defence or escape, or at least to prepare themselves for death: whereas this was carried on so clandestinely, that it was not to be known till executed. But while the king was making his speech, and the lords, and commons, in the integrity of their hearts, were thinking of nothing but what he said, on a sudden, in the twinkling of an eye, I dread to speak it, they were all to be sent together into the other world: the thoughts whereof fill me with such horror and confusion, that I dare say no more of it, but haste to take a short view of the grounds upon which these two plots were laid.

The first occasion of Haman's was, because Mordecai the Jew, who was related to the queen, would not bow to him; if he would have done that, he and his people might have been safe from danger. And if the Crown of England would have bowed to the Court of Rome, and the nobility and gentry would have submitted their necks again to that heavy yoke, this conspiracy had been never thought of: but they being now grown too wise for that, it was thought necessary, if possible, to cut them off, to make way for others, that would be more pliant and submissive.

But the great reason alleged for the destruction of the Jews, and that upon which the decree for it was grounded, was, because "their laws were diverse from all people," chap. 3. 8, 9. as Haman told the king. And he was so far in the right, that the Jews were governed by laws diverse from all other people; but they were such laws which all other people ought to have been governed by; laws made by the Supreme Governor of the world: in the observation whereof con-



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sisted all that could be truly called religion. So that the Jewish was the only true religion at that time professed upon earth ; and that made Haman have such a spite against the Jews, and the Devil to put it into his head to destroy them, if it had been possible, from off the face of the earth, that the whole earth might be overspread with idolatry and superstition.

How far this holds good as to our present case, is so well known, that I need only observe in general, that this nation having lived many years in communion with Rome, and thereby contracted all the errors and superstitions wherewith the Christian Religion was there corrupted and made different from what Christ and His Apostles had settled in the world ; it pleased God, at length, to open the eyes of the government to see an absolute necessity of laying aside all such corruptions in faith and practice, as ever they desired that the Christian, the only true religion now upon the face of the earth, should be again truly professed in it : which was, therefore, done so effectually, that the Christian Religion was here restored to its primitive simplicity and purity, both in doctrine, discipline, and worship.

This is that which made those who still continued in subjection to the See of Rome so very restless and uneasy, that they could never bear the sight of this Church, but have been ever since plotting and conspiring against it, more than against any that were reformed about the same time ; till, at length, they arrived at the highest pitch that all the power of Hell could carry them, the conspiracy which we this day commemorate.

Indeed, this Church was too well reformed, not to be assaulted on every side. When our Saviour said, that “ the gates of Hell should not prevail against His Church,” He plainly intimated and foretold, that the gates of Hell would use all the power and policy they had, to disturb, undermine, and overthrow His Church, that which was planted and ordered by Himself. But then He promised withal, that they should not prevail against it.

This day was this Scripture fulfilled in the sight of this nation, as to the Church which God had planted and established in it : though He suffered it to be brought to the

brink of ruin, He would not suffer it to be thrown down ; but, as He had done it many a time before, He preserved it now, though it was at the expense of little less than a miracle, if not at the full value.

That there was more than ordinary in it, is acknowledged and declared in the act itself that was made for the observation of this day, where it is said, that this conspiracy would have turned to the utter ruin of this whole kingdom, had it not pleased Almighty God, by inspiring the king's most excellent majesty with a Divine Spirit, to interpret some dark phrases of a letter shewed to his majesty, above and beyond all ordinary construction, whereby he miraculously discovered this hidden treason, not many hours before the appointed time for the execution thereof.

Here then we may justly stand still and wonder at the infinite goodness and truth which God then manifested, in defending His Church and people, and turning that which was intended for a day of slaughter and destruction, into a joyful day of deliverance ; and that too, not only then, but at another time also, above fourscore years after, when He brought over his late majesty upon the same day, to deliver us again from the same sort of enemies. They who do not see the Hand of God in all this, it is because they will not : they who do, cannot but highly esteem that Church, which Almighty God hath so mercifully delivered from such imminent and apparent dangers, and give Him the honour and praise which is due unto His holy Name for it ; as we do this day, and have cause to do so all the days of our life.

When Haman's conspiracy was defeated, and the destruction designed against the Jews was, by a wonderful chain of Providences, turned upon their enemies, it is said, that many of the people of the land became " Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them." Their enemies, though heathens, saw plainly from what had happened, that the Jews had more than ordinary favour shewed them from Heaven, and from thence inferred that their laws and religion must needs be more acceptable there than any other ; and, therefore, left their own for theirs, and became Jews themselves, that they might partake of the same privileges and favours with them.

*Esth. 8. 17.*

God grant that this wonderful deliverance which He

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wrought for our Church and nation, may have the same effect upon our enemies on all sides, that they would all turn to us; it would then be an happy deliverance for them; as it was for us, who enjoy the benefit of it to this day, not only in our freedom from that tyranny and oppression, which we must otherwise have lived under (if we had lived at all), but likewise in the true and free profession of the Gospel, to the saving of our souls: which we could not have enjoyed as we do now, if we had not been delivered from this horrid plot, which was laid on purpose to deprive the whole nation of it.

But thanks be to God Who hath delivered us, and in Whom we trust that He will yet deliver us. But that He may be graciously pleased to do so, we must take care to answer His holy end, in what He hath done already for us, by living as becometh the Gospel, which we so freely and truly profess in the Church, which He for that purpose so wonderfully preserved: for that is the end wherefore He so preserved it, as it is of all the glorious victories and successes which He hath given our most gracious sovereign and her kingdoms, since her happy accession to the throne. The great end of all is, that we may glorify Him; not only as we do this day, with our mouths, and I hope with our hearts too, but likewise through the whole course of our lives; by giving up ourselves to His service, and striving

[1 Pet. 2.9.]

all we can to shew forth the praises of Him "Who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light," and hath still continued us in it, notwithstanding all the artifices that have been used by the Devil or man to get us out.

[1 Cor. 4.1.]

Wherefore, "as a Minister of Christ, and Steward of the mysteries of God," I beseech you all, in His Name, that you would keep the wonderful works that He hath done always in remembrance: particularly that of this day: that ye would ascribe it wholly to His infinite goodness and mercy in Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate: that ye would fix it so firmly upon your minds, that you may never forget to love and honour Him above all; Who is above all, and hath done, and can do such great things for you when He pleaseth: that ye would learn by it to fear the Lord and your sovereign, and not keep company with them "who are

given to change:" and that ye would improve it to the great ends and purposes for which God did it, even that ye may worship and serve Him better while ye are in this world, and attain everlasting joy and felicity in the next. Which now, by His assistance, ye all may, if ye will; for do but believe and live in all respects as ye are taught by the Church of England, and my life, my eternal life, for yours, you will be happy for ever. <sup>[Prov. 24. 21.]</sup>

"Which God grant we may all be, through Christ our Saviour and mighty Deliverer; to Whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, praise, and glory, this day, and for evermore."



## SERMON IV.

Preached before the House of Peers, in the Abbey-Church of Westminster,  
on January the 30th, 1705-6.

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ACTS, xxii. 20.

*And when the blood of Thy Martyr Stephen was shed, I also  
was standing by, and consenting to his death, and kept the  
raiment of them that slew him.*

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THE opposition which the Christian Religion met with, when it was first planted upon earth, was so far from hindering its taking root, as was designed, that it made it grow more and spread wider than otherwise it would have done : for the Apostles and first Disciples of Christ, being forced to flee from their native country, carried the Gospel along with them, and preached it wheresoever they came, with that undaunted courage and resolution, with that invincible patience and constancy, that their very enemies could not but admire it, and acknowledge, that they could never have done and suffered so much as they did, without extraordinary and supernatural assistance from God Himself; Who gave sufficient testimony to the truth of what they taught, by enabling them not only to work miracles for the confirmation of it, but to seal it too with their own blood; as both the Apostles and many other Disciples did; which were, therefore, called martyrs, that is, witnesses for Christ and His Gospel; because they had attested the truth and certainty of what He had there taught, in the highest manner that creatures could do it, even by laying down their lives in the defence of it. Which was so full an evidence for the excellency of the Christian Religion, that many were thereby

brought over to the embracement of it, and many who had before embraced it, were more fully confirmed in it.

Wherefore the Church, to shew her gratitude to those who had done her such eminent service, and to encourage others to do the like, was wont to set apart those days on which they suffered, every year, whereon to keep up the memory of it. For which end she appointed public notaries to observe and register the several passages that occurred in any of their sufferings; which were publicly read in their congregations, upon the days dedicated every year to their memories, and therefore called by St. Cyprian, and others, *Memoriæ Martyrum*, as being the days on which the martyrs were commemorated: which, by reason of the great number of martyrs, were so many at last, that there was scarce a day in the year, but some martyr or other had suffered, and therefore his memory was celebrated upon it.

[Cyp. Ep. xii. pp. 27, 8. cf. Ep. xxxix. p. 77. Ed. Fell. Augustin. in Ps. 137. T. vi. p. 962. de Civ. Dei, viii. 27. Ep. Ecc. Smyrn. de Mart. S. Polycarp. cap. 18. Tom. ii. p. 202. Ed. Cotel.]

Now our Church, for many reasons, hath in a great measure laid aside this custom, observing no other martyrs' days, but only those on which the Holy Apostles and Evangelists, and such as are recorded by them, suffered. And as for all the rest, whether Saints, Martyrs, or Confessors, we celebrate their memories all together, upon the first day of November, therefore called All Saints' day. Only our late most gracious Sovereign, King Charles I. having suffered death in our days, for the sake of Christ and His Church, this day on which he suffered it, is set apart for the anniversary commemoration of it, according to the aforesaid practice and usage of the Primitive Church in the like cases.

This, therefore, being the reason of our assembling here upon this day, I have chosen the words which I have now read concerning the first martyr, St. Stephen, from whence to discourse briefly both of martyrdom in general, and of that in particular which we this day celebrate. Which, howsoever it may be at other times, cannot but be very seasonable at this.

The occasion of the words was this: when St. Stephen was stoned to death for preaching the Gospel of Christ, the witnesses, which were always the first that threw stones at him whom they accused, that they might do it more expeditiously, put off their upper garments, and laid them at a

SERM. IV. young man's feet who stood by, whose name was Saul, who also was consenting to his death. This Saul, otherwise called Acts 7. 58. Paul, being a strict and zealous Pharisee, from that time chap. 8. 1. forward made great havoc of the Church, persecuting all he could find that believed in the Lord Jesus; till, going to Damascus for that purpose, he was miraculously converted by our Lord Himself appearing to him. After which, he became as great a preacher of the Gospel, as he had been before a persecutor. And being come back to Hierusalem, while he was praying in the temple, he fell into a trance, chap. 22. 18. and saw our Lord again coming to him, and saying, "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Hierusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me;" which words were no sooner spoken by our Lord, but Saul presently called his former sins to remembrance, and made an humble chap. 22. 19. confession of them to Him; first, in general, saying, "Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee;" and then the particular sin that he was guilty of, as to the matter of St. Stephen; "And when the blood," saith he, "of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting to his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." Where he confesseth himself to have been accessory to that horrid sin, and reckoneth up the several circumstances that made him so.

That I may adjust, therefore, my discourse both to my text, and to the occasion of our present meeting together, it will be necessary to consider, what it is properly to be a martyr, such as St. Stephen was, and how it appears that King Charles I. was such a one: and then it will be easy to shew, how this day is to be kept in memory of him.

There are two things to be considered in a martyr; the cause for which he suffers, and what he suffers for that cause.

[Serm. 274. de S. Vincentio.] For although, according to St. Augustine's observation, it is not the suffering, but the cause, that makes the martyr; yet seeing no man can be made a martyr without suffering, that must be considered as well as the cause, in our searching after the notion of a martyr.

The cause for which St. Stephen was called a martyr, is intimated in my text itself, where the Apostle saith, "and

when the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed." 'Thy martyr,' that is, Christ's, to Whom he spake the words. And whosoever is not Christ's martyr, as he was, is no martyr at all, in the opinion of true Christians: for a martyr, in the Christian notion of the word, is one that suffers only upon the account of Christ, so as to testify by his sufferings the truth and excellency of that doctrine and discipline, which Christ in His Holy Gospel hath taught and delivered to mankind. Such a one may be properly said to be a martyr, or witness for Christ, because it is for His sake only that he suffers, according to what Christ Himself saith, "Blessed Matt. 5. 11. are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake." And therefore, when the Apostles were persecuted for preaching the Gospel of Christ, they looked upon themselves as so far His witnesses to the world, "and rejoiced that they were Acts 5. 41. counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name." As St. Peter also expresseth it, where he saith, "If ye be reproached 1 Pet. 4. 14. for the Name of Christ, happy are ye."

But none can be truly said to suffer for the sake or for the Name of Christ, but they who sincerely profess, and patiently suffer for, that religion which He hath revealed to the world; either for the whole, as the Apostles did, or else for some essential part of it, in defence of some fundamental article of the faith which He hath taught; or else, in obedience to some of those necessary Commandments that He hath given us. As many of the primitive Christians suffered death, rather than they would sacrifice, or burn incense to idols, because that was plainly contrary to the precepts of the Christian Religion; and therefore they were properly martyrs for Christ. And so were they in Queen Mary's days, who chose to suffer death, rather than worship images, pray to Saints departed, or do anything that was contrary to the doctrine or precepts of the Gospel.

For whosoever thus resolutely "contends for the faith [Jude 3.] which was once delivered to the Saints," so as to set himself in good earnest to believe and obey the Gospel of Christ, whatsoever it cost him, and patiently undergoes any punishment, and death itself, rather than deny the faith, or break any of the commandments of Christ; such a one doth thereby



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most effectually declare and testify to the world, that he is fully persuaded in his judgment and conscience, that whatsoever Christ said is really true, and whatsoever He commanded is really just and good, and necessary to be observed; and therefore such a one is properly Christ's martyr, and ought to be esteemed as such.

From whence we may likewise observe, what sufferings are necessary to the making a martyr; nothing less than death. I do not deny, but that they who suffer in their names, bodies, or estates, so as to be reproached, imprisoned, banished, stripped of all they have, maimed in their bodies, tortured upon racks, and the like, and all for the sake of Christ and His religion, such are so far witnesses for Christ, and do Him great service, for which they will have a proportionable reward. But such are not properly called martyrs, but confessors; the title of martyrs having been always appropriated to those who actually suffer some kind of death for Christ, as St. Stephen did. And how much soever any suffered, unless it came at last to a violent death, we do not find that their memories were publicly celebrated, as the martyrs' were.

But whatsoever kind of death any underwent for Christ's sake, it always entitled them to the name and crown of martyrdom. As what death was there, but some of the Apostles, or primitive Christians underwent it? some were stoned, some hanged upon gibbets, some crucified, some burnt, some flayed alive, some were beaten to death with clubs, some had their entrails taken out, some had their flesh torn off with pincers, some were thrown into the sea, and some to wild beasts, some were starved to death, and others had their limbs plucked asunder with horses, or branches of trees distorted. In short, there is scarce any sort of violent and cruel death, that the wit and malice of men or devils could invent, but some of the ancient Christians suffered it for their Master's sake. One of the mildest was beheading: thus died St. James the Apostle and Justin Martyr; thus died St. Cyprian, and many others, who had their heads chopped off, as St. John the Baptist's was; and thus died King Charles the Martyr, whose memory we this day celebrate.

We may call him a martyr, for he is so called by the King, and the three estates of the realm in parliament, as well as by the whole Church of England, in Convocation assembled : for in the calendar before our Common Prayer Book, over against this day is set, ‘ King Charles Martyr :’ and in the table of certain solemn days, for which particular services are appointed, the thirtieth of January is said to be the day of the martyrdom of King Charles the First : and in the service itself he is called our late martyred Sovereign, and God’s blessed martyr. Wherefore, having such a cloud of witnesses for it, we cannot doubt but that he was a martyr ; for none can deny that, without arraigning the wisdom and piety both of our Church and nation. But howsoever, it may not be amiss if we briefly consider how he came to be so. And the case, in short, was this :

The grand adversary of mankind, the Devil, having ever since the Reformation been plotting and contriving to undermine, and so to overthrow the Church of Christ established among us, sometimes by Papists, at other times by Sectaries, and still failing in his attempts upon it ; at last he used this stratagem : he, by his emissaries, possessed the people with an opinion, false as himself, that the Church was not yet sufficiently reformed, nor pure enough ; and that there was no way to reform it thoroughly, but by destroying the discipline and government of it by bishops ; as well knowing, that if this was once effected, his work would be done : for then all manner of heresy and error, schism and sedition, profaneness, immorality, and atheism itself, would come in of course ; as we find it did by woeful experience.

But although he insinuated this absurd conceit into some unwary people, such especially as God had given up to vile affections, and had “ sent them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie,” yet there were many in the nation that would never hearken to such a false suggestion ; especially the king himself, being a man of more than ordinary learning and piety. He was so far above the reach of such temptations, that he would never hearken to any proposals of that nature ; whereupon, the old serpent insinuated himself so far into a great part of the nation, as to stir them up to join in an unnatural war against their prince ; hoping, by

[2 Thes. 2.  
11.]

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Job 2. 4.

that means, to bring him into such straits, that he must either consent to the destruction of the Church, or lose his life. And he hoped now to make good that maxim, which failed him before in Job's case, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life;" and his policy so far prevailed, that the king was reduced to such straits, that he must part either with his religion or his life.

For his rebellious subjects, having got him into their hands, demanded of him to consent to the selling and alienating the revenues of the Church, and to the abolishing and laying aside the government of it by bishops, as now by law established, according to the institution of Christ and His Apostles: and if he would not consent to the destruction of the Church, according to those propositions, he could expect no other but to be destroyed himself. A sad dilemma! But the good king bore up under it with that courage as became a Christian, and one who would rather sacrifice his life than his conscience to them: for when these, among other propositions, were sent to him, he consulted not with flesh and blood, but made this solemn vow and resolution, still extant in his Meditations upon this subject; 'I will never,' saith he, 'consent to more than reason, justice, honour, and religion persuade me to be for God's glory, the Church's good, my people's welfare, and my own peace.' A most Christian resolution, which he strictly performed to the last.

*Eix. Bæss.*  
p. 80, edit.  
1649.

And therefore in the message which he sent from the Isle of Wight to the members at Westminster, he told them plainly, that as to the abolishing of archbishops and bishops, he could not consent to it, as he was a Christian, and a king. First, as a Christian, 'being satisfied in his judgment, that this order was placed in the Church by the Apostles themselves, and that ever since that time, it had continued in all Christian Churches throughout the world, till this last century of years. And in this Church, in all times of change and reformation, it had been upheld by the wisdom of his ancestors, as the great preserver of doctrine, discipline, and order in the service of God. Next, as a king, at his coronation, that he had not only taken a solemn oath, but that himself, and his predecessors, in their confirmation of the great charter, had inseparably woven the rights of the

Church into the liberties of the rest of the subjects.' And as to the alienation of the Church-lands, he told them, that he could not consent to that, it being a sin of the highest sacrilege.

From whence it appears, that he was fully convinced in his judgment and conscience, that he could not consent to what was demanded of him, without robbing God, and forswearing himself: and therefore in his Divine Meditations, he breaks forth into this remarkable expression: 'How can any man that wisheth not my damnation, persuade me at once to so notorious and combined sins of sacrilege and perjury!' Dugdale. Short View of the Troubles, p. 268. Eix. Bæd. p. 111, edit. 1649.

Now, considering that his not consenting to the destruction of Christ's Church established in this kingdom, and to the alienation of the revenues belonging to it, was the great cause wherefore he suffered; and considering that the reason why he could not consent to those propositions, was, because he would not transgress Christ's Laws, nor dishonour His Holy Name and His Religion, by those horrid sins of sacrilege and perjury: hence it is plain and manifest, that it was not his own, but Christ's cause, in which he suffered; and that he, dying for that cause, did thereby most clearly demonstrate to the world, that he preferred the Christian religion before his own life, and chose rather to suffer death, than to destroy the government which Christ had settled in His Church, or take away the revenues which were given to His service, or to forswear himself, contrary to His laws; and by necessary consequence, that he was, in a proper sense, His martyr, as St. Stephen is here said to be.

From hence we may see into some of the grounds upon which King Charles was so solemnly declared a martyr, and a standing law made for the anniversary observation of the day on which he suffered. It is in obedience to that law, that we are now assembled upon this day: and therefore it may be proper to consider how it ought to be observed.

If King Charles had died in the communion of the Church of Rome, and had suffered martyrdom for that, as he did for the Church of England, he would have been canonized long ago by the Pope, and would have had religious worship performed to him ever after, at least upon this day.



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[Ep. Ecc.  
Smyrn. de  
Mart. S. Po-  
lycarpi, c. 17.  
Tom. 2. p.  
202. Ed. Co-  
teler.]

But we have not so learned Christ; but as the Church of Smyrna, in the martyrdom of Polycarp, contemporary with the Apostles, saith, 'Christ we worship as the Son of God; and as for martyrs, His Disciples and followers, we deservedly love and honour them, for their eminent kindness to our Lord and Master, desiring to be their companions, and fellow-disciples.' Thus doth the primitive, and thus doth our Church celebrate the memories of martyrs: not by praying, or performing to them any sort of worship, that is due only to God; but by praising God for them, and praying to Him, that we may be such as they were. But there being something particular in this, which is not in the days of other martyrs, it is requisite that there be something particular also in the observation of it.

What that is, we may best learn from the act or statute that was made for it; wherein the Lords and Commons in parliament assembled, say to the king, 'We do hereby renounce, abominate, and protest against that impious fact, the execrable murder, and unparalleled treason, committed against the sacred person and life of our late sovereign, your majesty's most royal father, and all proceedings tending thereunto.' And therefore, they afterwards desire, that it may be enacted, and it was accordingly enacted, 'That every thirtieth day of January, unless it falls out upon the Lord's Day, and then the next day following, shall be for ever hereafter set apart to be kept and observed in all Churches and Chapels, of these your majesty's kingdoms, &c., as an anniversary day of fasting and humiliation, to implore the mercy of God, that neither the guilt of that sacred and innocent blood, nor those other sins, by which God was provoked to deliver up both us and our king into the hands of cruel and unreasonable men, may at any time hereafter be visited upon us, or our posterity.'

Where we may first observe, that they then agreed and solemnly declared, that the putting King Charles to death was murder, and execrable murder. And so certainly it was, murder aggravated with such dismal circumstances, that our ears may justly tingle, and our hearts tremble at the hearing of it. A king murdered! a pious, a virtuous, and most Christian king murdered! Charles, king of Great

Britain murdered ! murdered by his own subjects, by Englishmen ! formally, deliberately, publicly murdered in the face of the sun, before his own royal palace : and all because he would not forswear himself, rob God, and destroy the Church which Christ had committed to his protection and care ! and all this too, I dread to speak it, all this under the pretence of justice and religion ; the Christian, the Protestant religion ! Who can think of it, without horror and detestation ? none, surely, but such, whose hearts are as hard as theirs who did it.

All others cannot but be touched to the quick, at each remembrance of it, and would humble themselves under the Almighty Hand of God for it, although there was no law to oblige them to it ; much more now there is one. A law, that requires that this day be kept every year, all the kingdom over, as a day of fasting and humiliation, to implore the mercy of God in the pardon of that execrable murder, and the other sins whereby God was provoked to suffer that to be done, and to lay such heavy judgments as He then did upon the nation, that the guilt thereof may not be charged upon the people of this land : which we accordingly do in the form of prayer appointed for this day. And therefore I need not insist upon it, but only wish, that the confessions and prayers which we make to God upon this mournful occasion, may all come from the bottom of our hearts, and go up to Heaven accompanied with such godly sorrow and faith in Christ, that for His sake we may obtain the mercy we pray for.

But to manifest the sincerity of our grief and sorrow for what was then done, we must for the future abhor and avoid, not only all such wicked practices themselves, but all occasions of them. We must take heed that we be not seduced into heresy, schism, or sedition, neither run into parties or factions among ourselves, nor in any of the ways that commonly tend towards them : such especially as led to the martyrdom of King Charles, as they had before to that of St. Stephen : of whom it is written, that “ they suborned <sup>Acts 6. 11,</sup> men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous <sup>12.</sup> words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes against him ;”

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so it was here: wicked and designing men, the better to cover and carry on their wicked designs, contrived all the ways they could to asperse the king as well as the Church, giving it out among the people, and making them believe that their laws and liberties were in danger, and their religion too. And it must be confessed, that the true religion established in the kingdom was then in danger: but it was so from themselves, not from the king, who did what he could to defend it; and to defend it from them. But howsoever, by this means they stirred up the people to rise in open rebellion against their sovereign, which by several steps and degrees advanced him at last to the crown of martyrdom. From whence we should all take warning, never to give ear to any ill reports that are spread abroad of the government under which we live, nor entertain, much less disperse, any groundless fears and jealousies of the public administration. For if credulous people should be once possessed with them, we know not how far they may run beyond the bounds of duty and allegiance, into treason, rebellion, and murder itself.

It is the duty of all subjects to be always subject to the higher powers, “not only for wrath, but for conscience’s sake;” to “study to be quiet, and to mind every one his own business,” leaving the government of the Church and state to those to whom the Universal Governor of the World hath committed it: and whatsoever happens, still to continue steadfast and immovable in our duty to God, and for His sake to those whom He hath set over us. For which purpose, it is very expedient and of great use, that this day be religiously observed every year, that people may be often put in mind both of the greatness of the sin of rebellion, and likewise of the dreadful consequences of it; of which we have but too sad an instance, in that which we this day lament and mourn for.

But in the midst of our lamentation and mourning, we must remember also to give thanks to God, for His special grace and favour to our late martyred Sovereign, and in him to this whole kingdom: particularly for the manifold graces and virtues that shined so gloriously in him both all his life and at his death; when he forgave and prayed for his

Rom. 13. 5.  
[1 Thess. 4.  
11.]

very murderers, as the first martyr did, after the Divine example of our Blessed Redeemer. But these things are so well known, and so well expressed in the service for the day, that I need not enlarge upon them.

That which ought more especially to be observed is, the wonderful providence of God, in making this martyred prince and his family the great instrument of defending, restoring, delivering, and upholding our happy constitution in Church as well as state. He himself both lived and died in the defence of it: when for the sins of the nation it was broken in pieces, so that scarce any one part of it was visible among us for some years, God sent the blessed martyr's son to restore it; his daughter's son to deliver it when it was again in extreme danger; and then his other son's daughter, our most gracious Sovereign, to keep it as he left it in peace and safety: for whom we have therefore infinite cause to praise God, and to love and honour, as being a branch of that royal stock that was cut down for supporting our Church; much more as inheriting his virtues as well as kingdoms, as in other respects, so in relation also to our Church; she being as constant an attendant at the daily prayers, as frequent a communicant at the Altar, as strict an observer of the orders, and as much concerned for the peace and welfare of it, as her grandfather, of ever-blessed memory, was. To which we may add her royal bounty for the augmentation of the maintenance of the poorer clergy, in which she exceeds all that went before her. From all which we may well conclude, that although our Church be always in danger from the many enemies wherewith it is encompassed, yet we have no cause to fear, but that, by God's grace and blessing upon her Majesty's care and conduct, she will preserve, defend, and uphold it, in spite of all the powers of Hell, through the whole course of her reign: which I heartily wish may be the longest that ever any king or queen reigned in this or any other kingdom upon earth.

But how long soever it shall be, there will be a time for her to leave her earthly crown for one in Heaven. And whether it will please God that she shall leave it to the issue of her own royal body, He only knows. But this we know,



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that He of His great goodness hath still in reserve a numerous offspring of His martyr's royal sister, in the illustrious House of Hanover, every way qualified to succeed, if there should be occasion. And we must acknowledge it to be a great happiness to have always one of that royal family to reign over us, which hath hitherto been so great a blessing to this Church and kingdom, and we hope will ever be so to the end of the world.

Among the many great blessings that we have received from thence, one of the most remarkable, and that which is the great glory of our Church, is, that so great a prince gave such a testimony to it, as was never given to any National Church besides, and sealed it with his own blood, before many thousand witnesses that stood by, as Saul did at the martyrdom of St. Stephen.

There are none, I suppose, here present that "stood by" when King Charles was murdered; and I hope none that ever consented to it; but that we can truly say, as the Lords and Commons did in the act before mentioned, that "We renounce, abominate, and protest against that impious fact." This is the least we can do to preserve ourselves from the guilt of that sacred and innocent blood. But that it may not only cease to be a curse, but also become a blessing to us, we must now set a higher value upon the Church for which it was shed, and labour more abundantly to adorn it, as this holy martyr did, with virtue and good works.

In the first ages of Christianity it was observed, that "the blood of martyrs was the seed of the Church;" that whereby it increased and multiplied. God grant that the blood of this royal martyr may have the same effect among us; that they who are not of our communion may be prevailed upon to come into it; and they who are, may be more confirmed in it, by the testimony and example of this great monarch; who, holding constant communion with our Church, by God's blessing upon the means there used, was, like St.

Acts 6. 5.

Stephen, a man "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," so as to be able to prefer his duty to God before all his kingdoms and dominions, his liberty, and his life too. This was to be a Christian, this was to be a Saint indeed! And such we may all be, if we will but take the same course as he did

for it, by keeping close to the communion of our Church in all points.

For this was the great end wherefore the Eternal Son of God purchased to Himself an Universal Church with His Own blood, and by His almighty power still continues it upon earth, that men, being fallen into a state of sin, might there be sanctified, or made holy again, to the praise and glory of God. For which end He hath instituted in it several Offices, Sacraments, and other ordinances, to be the means whereby we may "all receive of His fulness, and John 1. 16. grace for grace," called therefore the "means of grace." To which He hath also added "exceeding great and precious 2 Pet. 1. 4. promises, that by these we might be partakers of the Divine nature;" "Holy, as He Who hath called us is holy, in all 1 Pet. 1. 15. manner of conversation," as many thousands have found by experience, who once were sinful mortals upon earth, as we at present are, but now are glorified Saints in Heaven. But they were first made Saints upon earth. And why may not we be made so, as well as they? We especially, who live in that part of the Holy Catholic Church, where the foresaid means of grace are as regularly, as constantly, and as powerfully administered, to speak with the least, as in any place upon the face of the whole earth? So that it is our own faults, and we must blame none but ourselves for it, if we be not as great Saints as ever lived. For if we be not failing to ourselves in the use, we cannot fail of the end of those holy institutions.

Wherefore, beloved in the Lord, let us now resolve in the Name of Christ, that we will no longer content ourselves with the bare profession of our Holy Religion, nor with doing only some things which our Church requires, nor yet with pretending and talking high for it; but that we will do all we can, as this blessed martyr did, to live up to the height of it; steadfastly believing all that is there taught, and constantly exercising ourselves in all and every one of the means of grace, which are there administered or prescribed, trusting always in God for His assistance and blessing upon what we do. And let us never think that we do all we ought, or as we ought to do it, till we find our passions subdued, and our whole man restored to a right

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[Phil. 3.  
20.]

Heb. 12. 2.

frame and temper again: till our hearts be wholly inclined to God, and set to obey His laws, and to do all such good works as He hath prepared for us to walk in: till, after the example of the Saints and martyrs, and all the faithful servants of the Most High God, we can live above this world, and have our conversation always in Heaven, where our great Lord and Master is. Then we shall think nothing too great to do, nothing too much to suffer for His sake. But, if all the kingdoms upon earth were ours, we should be willing and ready to part with them all at once, rather than deny any one article of our Christian faith, or wilfully transgress any one of those Holy Commandments, which the supreme Lawgiver of the world hath given us to observe: "Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God:" where He is continually interceding for all those who serve Him faithfully upon earth, that they may ever live with Him in Heaven; with Him Who liveth and reigneth with the Father and Holy Ghost, one God blessed for ever.

# THE DUTY OF ZEAL.

## A SERMON

PREACHED

BEFORE THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION  
OF THE GOSPEL IN FOREIGN PARTS,

At the Parish Church of St. Mary-le-Bow, Feb. 21st, 1707.

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*Not Published in the Edition of the Author's Collected Works.*





## SERMON V.

### THE DUTY OF ZEAL.

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2 COR. ix. 2.

*And your zeal hath provoked very many.*

WHEN our blessed Saviour had planted His Gospel, and watered it with His Own blood in the land of Judea, He, after His resurrection, commanded His Apostles to propagate it in all other nations, saying, “Go ye, therefore, and make all nations disciples, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.” But lest they should mistake His meaning, and think it impossible for them to do what He commanded, seeing they were to continue but a short time upon earth, He therefore added, “And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;” whereby He gave them to understand, that He laid that command upon them not as private persons, but as His Apostles, and therefore upon all that should succeed them also in that office, which He, for that purpose, would have to be handed from them to others, and so continued from one to another successively to the end of the world: that He did not therefore expect or require, that they themselves should convert all nations, but that this great work should be begun by them, and carried on by their successors in all ages, so as not to be fully accomplished till towards the end of the world: and He assured them withal upon His Word, that He Himself would be with them, and with all

Matt. 28.  
19, 20.

ver. 20.

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that should succeed them in that Apostolical office and employment, at all times whensoever they shall be heartily engaged in it, whereby they would be enabled to do what He had commanded so effectually, that at His second coming He shall find all nations made His Disciples, professing their subjection to Him, and owning Him for their Lord and Saviour.

John 14. 16.

Our Lord and Saviour having made this promise to His Apostles a little before He ascended into Heaven; soon after He came there, He accordingly sent His Holy Spirit, of the same substance with Himself, “to abide with them for ever;” whereby they were not only qualified for it, but excited, animated, and empowered to propagate His Gospel far and near, notwithstanding all the opposition that men or Devils could make against it. For which purpose, both the Apostles themselves and many other Apostolical men, being led by the same Spirit, travelled about the world, some into one place, and some into another, so that in a short time the Gospel was preached in most parts of the earth, that were then known to be inhabited. And they who could not go themselves, assisted those who did, to the utmost of their power.

Acts 4. 34,  
35.

For the Disciples of Christ in those days, by His Spirit abiding in them, were so full of faith and charity, that they never thought they could do enough for His honour, or for the good of mankind whom He came to save. And therefore they willingly parted with any thing they had for His sake, whether it was for the maintenance and encouragement of those who went about to publish His Name and Gospel to the world, or for the relief and support of those who embraced it. “They also who had lands or houses, sold them, and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles’ feet,” to be employed by them to such pious and charitable uses as they should think fit. “And distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” First, to those who preached the Gospel, in case they needed it for the better performance of their duty: and then to those who had received it, in case they wanted any of the necessities of this life: who being all of the communion of Saints, they who gave any thing to such holy uses were said “to minister to the Saints.”

[Rom. 15.  
25.]

Of this we have here a remarkable instance in the Corinthians, who were so ready to do it of their own accord, that the Apostle did not think it necessary for him to put them in mind of it. “For as touching the ministering to the saints,” <sup>2 Cor. 9.</sup> saith he, “it is superfluous for me to write to you. For I <sup>1, 2.</sup> know the forwardness of your mind: for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia (of which Corinth was the metropolis) was ready a year ago.” The Apostle, it seems, above a year before he wrote this Epistle, had sent word to the Church at Corinth, as he did to other Churches, that there would be occasion, ere long, for great sums of money to be raised for the sake of Christ and His Gospel; which the Corinthians no sooner heard of, but they prepared their quota, that is, as much as they were able, that it might be ready whensoever it should be called for, though it was a year before there was any absolute necessity for it: which the Apostle hearing of, he was so pleased with it, that he boasted of it to the Christians at Macedonia, that what was now demanded of them, the Corinthians had done a year before, and had thereby shewed their great zeal and forwardness for promoting the Gospel of Christ. Upon which he makes this remark, and records it to their eternal honour, “And your zeal hath provoked very many.”

As if he had said, The zeal which ye have manifested by contributing so readily to the service of Christ, and His Gospel, hath had this happy effect, that many, very many have been thereby excited and stirred up to do so too. So that your forwardness in giving hath done more good than what you gave: in that many, both single persons and whole Churches, hearing of it, have followed your good example, in giving as liberally as ye did, which otherwise they might never have thought of.

This the Apostle asserted upon his own knowledge. And the Holy Spirit, by which he wrote, both confirmed the truth of it, and moved him to put the Corinthians in mind of it, the better to encourage them to continue and cherish that zeal which had done so much good, not only to many of the Saints, but to the whole Church of Christ. And it is left upon record, that we also may know how to provoke others to good works, even by being zealous of them ourselves. So



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that it was not only for their sake to whom he wrote, but for ours likewise, and for the sake of the whole Catholic Church, and all the members of it, in all ages, that the Apostle here saith, "And your zeal hath provoked very many."

What he means by zeal in this place appears from the context. For the Apostle, as I observed, is here speaking of the Corinthians' forwardness in ministering to the Saints, or those who professed, or published, the Gospel of Christ; whereby they discovered the great love and honour which they had for Christ, together with their earnest and fervent desire, that His Gospel might be upheld, and propagated in the world, to the glory of Almighty God. This he calls then zeal, or that fervency of spirit, which is opposed to lukewarmness or indifferency for the Christian religion, which is now too manifest in most of those who profess it: and even in those days appeared in some, particularly in the Church of Laodicea, to which He to Whom all hearts are opened, said by His Apostle and Evangelist, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot: So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth." And then it follows soon after, "Be zealous, therefore, and repent," which shews that their lukewarmness was a sin to be speedily repented of; and that, in order to their repenting aright of it, it was necessary for them to become zealous.

Zealous, such as Christians in those days generally were, when they took cheerfully the spoiling of their goods, hazarded all they had for the sake of Christ, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name, when to their power, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves to contribute to the necessities of the Church, and the members of it, as St. Paul testifieth, who was himself also a great example of this primitive zeal. For when the Holy Ghost witnessed, that in every city where he was to preach the Gospel, he should meet with bonds and afflictions; he was so far from being discouraged, that he roundly said, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

Rev. 3. 15,  
16.

ver. 19.

Acts 5. 41.

2 Cor. 8. 3.

Acts 20. 24.

And when a prophet had told him that he should be bound at Hierusalem, and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, and the Disciples thereupon besought him with tears in their eyes not to go thither, he answered with a holy indignation, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? For I Acts 21. 13. am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus." This was the zeal of the first Disciples of Christ: true Christian zeal indeed. And the memory of it is transmitted to posterity, that Christians in all ages may learn by their example, not to be cold, or luke-warm, but zealous for God their Saviour, so as to prefer His honour before all things in this life, and, if there be occasion, before life itself.

But then we must take care that our zeal be as theirs was, according to knowledge, and so kept within the compass of the rules which God hath set us in His holy Word. For no zeal for His honour can justify any breach of His laws. And as it is "good to be zealously affected always in Gal. 4. 18. a good thing," it is a good thing only for which we should be ever so affected. Not for any private opinion, not for a party or faction, not for either side of a doubtful disputation, not for unwritten traditions, wherein men are apt to spend all their zeal, so as to have little or none left for that which is the proper object of it; but, as it is said of Phineas, in his great commendation, that he was "zealous for his God:" so Numb. 25. 13. must we be: our zeal must have respect to Him, the chiefest good, and to such things only as tend directly to His honour and glory.

As the faith and doctrine of the Gospel doth in an eminent manner. Forasmuch as it is by that only, that the glory of His mercy and truth shines forth in the redemption of mankind, as His wisdom, and power, and other perfections do in the creation and government of the world. And, therefore, in the first ages of the Church, when any appeared to deny the Godhead of our blessed Saviour, or any of the fundamental articles of our Christian faith, the bishops from all quarters ran in haste, and joined their forces together, to oppose and condemn them; and were constantly assisted in it by all that had any true zeal for Christ and His Gospel. And all that have any such zeal in our days, ought to shew

SERM. V. it now ; now, that there is so much occasion for it, by con-  
 Jude, 3. tending earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the Saints.

Here, then, our zeal must begin ; but it must not stop there, but go on to the great duties also required in the Gospel ; and which are therefore required, that God may be glorified by our zealous performance of them : I say by our zealous performance of them. For, to perform them coldly and carelessly, as if it was no great matter whether we performed them or no ; this is so far from honouring God, that it is a great reflection upon Him and His Gospel, making as if He there required any thing of us that is needless and impertinent ; or, as if we had no great obligation upon us to do [Tit. 2. 14.] what He bids us. Whereas to be “ zealous of good works,” of all such works as He hath set us in His Gospel, and to do them heartily and zealously, with all our might ; this shews that we really believe the Gospel to be of His inspiration, and that we are absolutely bound to do what He there commands, for that reason, because He commands it : to the glory of His supreme authority to command what He pleaseth, and of His infinite goodness in what He hath commanded.

Neither will true zeal for God thus put us only upon the zealous observing His commands ourselves, but likewise, upon striving all we can that they may be observed by others also ; or at least, that they be not openly neglected or violated, if we can help it. Of this our Saviour Himself hath given a great example ; Who seeing the house dedicated to the service of God turned into an house of merchandise, contrary to His command, drove out those who did it with so much zeal, that it put His Disciples in mind of David’s John ii. 17. words, “ The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.”

Thus ought every one to be zealous for his God, in the place and station wherein God hath set him for that purpose, and to lay hold upon all opportunities which are offered to shew it. As when he sees the Name of God profaned, His Word contemned, His service and worship slighted ; when he sees Christians themselves, or such as once pretended to be so, falling back into heathenism and infidelity ; renouncing their Baptism, if they ever had it, and rejecting the Sacra-

ment itself, which Christ ordained as the only way whereby to bring any into His Church, or into the number of His Disciples; so that if such people could have their will, Christ should have neither Church nor any one Disciple upon earth: when he sees the other Sacrament, also instituted by our Lord Himself, quite laid aside by the same sort of people, and shamefully neglected by those also who were once made His Disciples, and still profess themselves to be so:—when he sees those who are called Christians, regarding the laws of Christ and His Church no more than Turks or heathens, but, by their lewd and wicked practices, “crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting Him to an open shame:” when any, I say, who are zealous for their God and Saviour, as all ought to be, see people thus dishonouring Him themselves, and giving occasion to His enemies to blaspheme, they ought to shew their zeal and concern, by doing what they can to vindicate His glorious Name, His Word, and all His holy institutions. And the less they can do, the more they ought to be troubled for it; as David when he said, “Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because men keep not Thy laws.” [Heb. 6. 6.]

Psal. 119.  
136.

But true zeal for God will not only put us upon reproving, correcting, and preventing, as much as in us lies, any dishonour that may be cast upon Him by those among whom we live, but, likewise, upon promoting His honour and glory, as far as we can in all other places. And seeing His glory, as I before observed, shines forth most gloriously in the way that He hath made for the Salvation of mankind, and revealed in His glorious Gospel; therefore if we have any zeal for His glory, it will appear in striving all we can to spread and propagate His said Gospel, that “His way may be known upon earth, and His saving health among all nations:” that all nations may know Him, and serve Him, and worship Him, and give Him thanks for His great glory manifested in their redemption, and so partake of it themselves, to their eternal happiness and Salvation: which will itself also be an addition to His glory; for the more are saved by Him, the more there will be to serve and glorify Him for ever: “Who therefore would have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth.” And therefore all who are truly 1 Tim. 2. 4.



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 Salvation of all men.

For, though a man may pretend to a great deal of zeal, and yet do nothing, if that which he pretends to be hearty and sincere, it will certainly incline and move him to employ his parts, his time, his power, his learning, his estate, and whatsoever talents God hath put into his hands, for His use and service. As I do not doubt but we all desire to do ; it being the greatest honour that we are capable of, to serve so great and so good a Master : the greatest and the best in the whole world.

But it is impossible for us to serve Him any other way, than by labouring what we can to promote His honour and glory. That being the great end of all His works, and the design that He Himself is always carrying on. And so far as we contribute any thing towards the accomplishment of it, so far He is pleased to look upon us as serving Him, and to reward us accordingly for it. Neither is it possible for us to promote His honour any way so much as by making Him known in the world, according to the revelations which He hath given us of Himself in His holy Word, and which He hath therefore given us, that all mankind might know Him, and acknowledge Him for their Maker and Redeemer. And therefore what is done towards that, is the highest service that we can ever do Him.

Especially considering, that God Himself hath said, that  
 Isa. 11. 9. “ the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the  
 Gen. 22. 18. waters cover the sea ;” that “ in Abraham and his seed,” which  
 Gal. 3. 8, 16. is Christ, “ all the nations of the earth shall be blessed ;” “ that  
 Ps. 72. 11. all kings shall fall down before Him, and all nations shall  
 Luke 24. 47. serve Him ;” and “ that repentance and remission of sins  
 should be preached in His Name among all nations.” There  
 are many such prophecies and promises all over the Bible ;  
 from whence we may certainly conclude, that the time will  
 come, when the Gospel shall be preached to all nations, and  
 that they shall receive it, so as to partake of the inestimable  
 blessings promised in it. And we have some ground to  
 hope, that the time is now drawing near. He having so  
 ordered it in His good Providence, that there is scarce any  
 habitable part of the earth but hath been discovered in the

two last ages, and are now known and sometimes visited by those who profess the faith of Christ. And whatsoever they might design to themselves who made such discoveries, we may well suppose, that God's end in putting them upon it, and prospering them in it, was to open a door and make way for the spreading of the Gospel among all nations, as He hath foretold and promised. Happy are they whom He is pleased to make His instruments to bring it about! They are subservient to Him in making good His word, and in fulfilling the promises that He hath made, and so in setting forth the glory of His goodness and truth: and therefore may truly be said to serve Him, as much as it is possible for His creatures to do it.

But they who are employed in this or any such good work, must do it with all their might, for His sake, "Who Tit. 2. 14. gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" that we should not only do good works, but be zealous of them. Zealous of doing more than other people, and zealous in every one we do; that we may shew forth the praises and virtues of Him Who hath redeemed us, by living as His peculiar people, and shining as lights in the world, that others "may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in Heaven," and be thereby [Matt. 5. 16.] provoked to do so themselves.

For this is one of the happy effects of true zeal for God, and that which makes it so acceptable to Him, even because it doth not only put the person who hath it upon doing Him more than ordinary service; but others also are thereby excited and provoked to follow, if not to exceed, the pattern that he hath set them. As the Apostle here observeth of the Corinthians, that "their zeal hath provoked very many:" so it did then, and so it still doth, and ever will do, whensoever it appears to be hearty and sincere.

When they who profess the Christian religion are cool, or lukewarm in it, concerning themselves no further than only to profess it, other people will be apt to think that they themselves do not believe what they profess, and therefore will trouble their heads no further about it. Whereas, if they see our "faith working by love" and zeal for God, and [Gal. v. 6.]

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inspiring us with courage and resolution, not only to live up to the rules of our religion ourselves, but to endeavour all we can, whatsoever it costs us, that others also may do so; this shews that we are in earnest, and so fully assured of the truth of our religion, that we think nothing too great to be done or suffered for it. And this, if any thing, must needs put them upon serious thoughts, and inflame them with hearty desires and resolutions to do at least as much as we, for the honour of Him, Whom they cannot but own to be their God and Saviour as well as ours. For there is such beauty and lustre in all true Christian zeal and virtue, that it allures the eyes of those who behold it, and affects their hearts with a holy emulation and ambition to embrace and follow it: as appeared not only in the first propagation of our holy religion, but likewise in the reformation of it after it had been corrupted in these parts of the world. How did the zeal of some few princes and other learned and good men provoke and stir up people of all ranks and qualities, yea, whole nations, to venture their lives and fortunes in restoring it to its primitive purity in doctrine and worship!

[Matt. 6.  
5.]

But we need not go so far back for instances of this nature. We have a great one now before us; the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts; which was no sooner incorporated by his late Majesty, but the president and members of it contributed and subscribed so liberally to the carrying on this most Christian design, that many were thereby stirred up to tread in their steps; and some, without letting their left hand know what their right hand doth. Insomuch, that the first year they were able to lay out upon it above 400*l.* in the second, above 500*l.* in the third, above 800*l.*: and in the next, above 1300*l.* So mightily did this Apostolical fund increase and multiply from the zeal of the first promoters of it, and that among ourselves, besides the influence it hath had upon foreign Churches. So that I may truly say to you as St. Paul here saith to the Corinthians, “your zeal hath provoked very many.” And I hope it will still do so, every day more and more.

I am sure it is but necessary it should. For, the further ye go, the more work ye will find, and by consequence

more hands must be employed and maintained to go on with it. As ye have met with some already, ye will find many rubs and impediments in the way. "A great door <sup>1 Cor. 16. 9.</sup> and effectual is opened, and there are many adversaries." Ye are now demolishing the strongholds of Satan, to enlarge the kingdom of Christ. And therefore you can expect no other but that the gates of Hell will exert the utmost of their power, and employ all the agents they can get upon earth, to obstruct and hinder it. But that should not slacken your zeal, but make it rather the more flagrant: "for the God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet <sup>Rom. 16. 20.</sup> shortly." You fight the battles of the Lord of Hosts, and therefore need not fear what men or Devils can do unto you. He hath often said it, and He will make it good, that all nations shall one time or other be subdued to His Son, and be blessed in Him. Many are so already. And this seems to be the critical time to bring in many more, if not all the rest.

Now, that there is such an unusual conjunction of extraordinary providences in this part of Christendom, working together, in all appearance, to bring about something more than ordinarily great and glorious. And what can be greater, what more glorious, than the general reformation of the Christian religion, where it is already planted, and the propagation of it all the world over?

Now, that we have such a religious and gracious Sovereign, who is always ready, as ready as she is able, upon all occasions, to promote and encourage all sorts of good works, and this particularly, the best of all. Now, that we have a Church established among us so truly Apostolical, that the Gospel may from thence be spread abroad, as it was at first, in its native simplicity, without any mixture of heresy, superstition, or idolatry.

Now, that we have so many factories settled in Asia and Africa, and so many colonies in America, all among infidels and heathens, whereby we have the fairest opportunity that ever can be offered, to open "their eyes, and turn them <sup>[Acts 26. 18.]</sup> from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God."

Now, that such multitudes of heathens are brought out of Africa every year, and made slaves to Christians in Ame-



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rica, which I verily believe God would never have suffered, but that He designed they should be there all taught the principles of the Christian religion, and some so well, as to be fit to be sent back again into their own country, with full instructions to preach the Gospel to those nations, that they also may be brought over to Christ; by Whom alone either they or we can be saved. Woe be to such as oppose so gracious and merciful a design! But blessed be all they who do what they can to further it.

Now, that we have so many and so great estates gotten by our trade with the heathen, and by their arts and labours in all the foresaid parts of the world. For they who have gotten them, cannot surely but look upon themselves as bound in conscience and gratitude to promote their happiness in the other world, by whom they themselves are enriched in this. Otherwise, they have little reason to expect God's blessing upon what they have gotten, either that or any other way.

Now, that the care and management of this great affair is committed by a royal charter to so many and such persons, that all who give any thing to this most pious and charitable use, may be confident it will be faithfully applied to the use for which it is given, and to no other.

Now, that God hath opened the hearts of so many good Christians, to pity the sad estate of the heathens, and hath inclined others to go and help them. Some in holy orders having now offered themselves of their own accord upon this service, only to set forth the glory of God, and to set forward the Salvation of all men. God grant that we may have more of them!

Now, I say, that it hath pleased the Supreme Disposer of all things in the world, that so many things should concur, at this time, for the carrying on this glorious work, it cannot be doubted but that He approves of the undertaking, and will prosper it in your hands, if it be but prosecuted with that zeal and vigour which the case requires. But it is a work of time, and of great charges too. And therefore, as the Gospel was at first propagated in a great measure by the zeal of those who had embraced it; so it must be now. All that have any true love for God, for

Christ, for themselves, or for the souls of other men, must now shew it. They must all contribute, every one, as God hath prospered him, to the maintenance and support of those who go into foreign parts to promote and propagate the Gospel of our ever blessed Redeemer. And they who can do no more, must at least assist them with their daily prayers.

When our Lord and Master saw the multitude about Him, as sheep having no shepherd, He was moved with compassion on them, and said to His Disciples, "The har-<sup>Matt. 9. 37, 38.</sup>vest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." The case is much the same now; there are vast numbers of people still upon earth, that have none to lead them in the way to Heaven. And there are but few, that will undertake to do it. Pray ye therefore to God, that as He hath sent some already, He will be graciously pleased to send more and more from this and other parts of His Catholic Church into the dark corners of the world, upon this Apostolical employment, to bring [1 Pet. 2. 9.] them "out of darkness into His marvellous light." Unless He sends them, they had better stay at home. But if they go with His commission, He, be sure, according to His Word, will be always with them, and with all that He shall send from time to time, "till the fulness of the Gentiles Rom. 11. 25. be come in," and all the "kingdoms of this world become Rev. 11. 15. the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ." And then as it is written, "All the world shall worship Him, sing of Ps. 66. 3. Him, and praise His Name." To Him be glory and dominion now and for ever.

LONDON:  
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